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BLUE JAY

Volume 58 Number 4

December 2000



Blue Jay, founded in 1942 by Isabel M. Priestly, is a journal of natural history and conservation for Saskatchewan and adjacent regions. It is published quarterly by **Nature Saskatchewan, 206-1860 Lorne Street, Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 2L7.**

CN ISSN 0006-5099

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EDITORIAL INFORMATION: *Blue Jay* welcomes all submissions, hand-written or typed, polished or in need of editorial assistance. All items for publication should be addressed to the editors. Deadlines for text for each issue are two months prior to issue, i.e. 1 January, 1 April, 1 July and 1 October. Deadlines for photographs are one month later. Please include the author's telephone number or E-mail address for editorial contact. Manuscripts should be submitted in duplicate. Manuscripts can be submitted in electronic form, either on a 3.5" diskette or by E-mail in WordPerfect, Microsoft Word, Rich Text Format (rtf) or ASCII text. Send images separately. For further information, see "Guidelines for Authors" in the March 2000 issue of *Blue Jay*, Vol. 58 (1). R. W. Nero abstracts *Blue Jay* for *Recent Ornithological Literature*. *Blue Jay* is abstracted by BIOSIS.

Common names are used for birds, mammals and butterflies. Bird names follow the Checklist of North American Birds by the American Ornithologists' Union (7th edition, 1998); mammal names, The Mammals of Canada by Banfield ; butterfly names, The Butterflies of Canada by Layberry *et al.* For other groups, both scientific and common names are included.

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Bulk subscription orders (minimum of five to one address) are available to society members and educational institutions at the rate of \$15 (Can.) for the first subscription and \$13 for each additional one. Outside Canada, fees are \$18 (Can.). We do not collect GST on memberships or subscriptions.

Covers: Front: Lynx, portrait. Watercolour, 1983 W. Ray Salt
Back: Coyote on hillside, lying down. Watercolour 1979 W. Ray Salt

Printed by Administration Centre Printing Services, Regina, Saskatchewan on 10% recycled paper.

THIS ORGANIZATION RECEIVES FUNDING FROM



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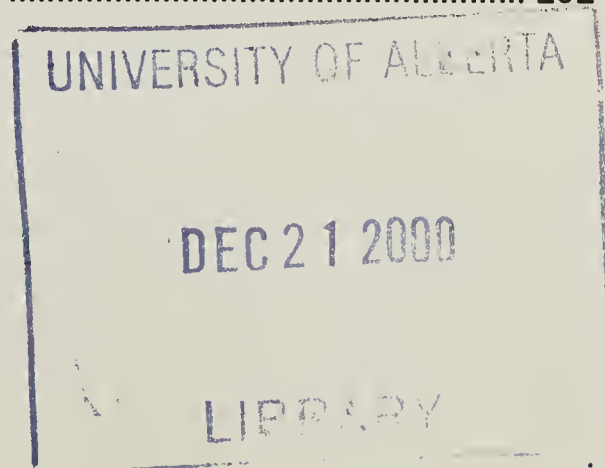
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EDITORS' MESSAGE

With this issue, we send all readers of *Blue Jay* our best wishes for the Christmas season and the New Year. We feel that this issue provides particularly good holiday reading, from the Great Bufflehead Crash, 1940 to Frank Roy's review of Trevor Herriot's book, *River in a Dry Land*, which will surely inspire you to read that as well.

Volume 58 of *Blue Jay* has been blessed with contributions from a wonderful array of writers. It is the writers that make *Blue Jay* what it is and we encourage all readers of *Blue Jay* to become writers - a perfect winter pastime. We have also received excellent photographs and artwork which we whole-heartedly welcome. And, as we are running low on mystery photos, we invite you to submit photos of natural history oddities that you have been unable to identify. We will see if we can include them in the Mystery Photo column.

Through the kindness of Dr. Jim Salt, *Blue Jay* recently received a small collection of high-quality reproductions of paintings by his father, the late W. Ray Salt. Two of these are featured on the covers of this issue. Many readers will recognize this father and son team as the authors of *The Birds of Alberta*, which is as much a central reference work for the birds of the western prairies now as it was when published 23 years ago. You also will find in this issue two pen and ink drawings and a note entitled "Coyotes", from a collection of Ray Salt's stories tape-recorded by Jim. We are most grateful to Jim for his generous donation of the artwork and for sharing the stories with *Blue Jay* readers.

Producing an issue of *Blue Jay* is a community effort and the list of people who make it happen is long. In addition to the many writers and photographers, we would like to recognize the contribution of the Associate Editors and reviewers who maintain the high quality of information in the articles and notes, and the many people whose specific expertise we rely on, often on short notice, to provide editors' notes (in this issue, Andy Didiuk, Cedrick Gillott and Stuart Houston) and help with identification of the mystery photographs. Many thanks to you all for your willingness to help.

Finally, we express our thanks to our proof-reader Nancy Allan, the talented people at Administration Centre Printing Services and to Teresa Dolman who has recently taken over the job of preparing the annual index for *Blue Jay* starting with Volume 58.

Anna and Ted Leighton, Editors

THE GREAT BUFFLEHEAD CRASH, 1940

JAMES K. FINLEY, 10232 Summerset Place, Sidney, BC V8L 4X2

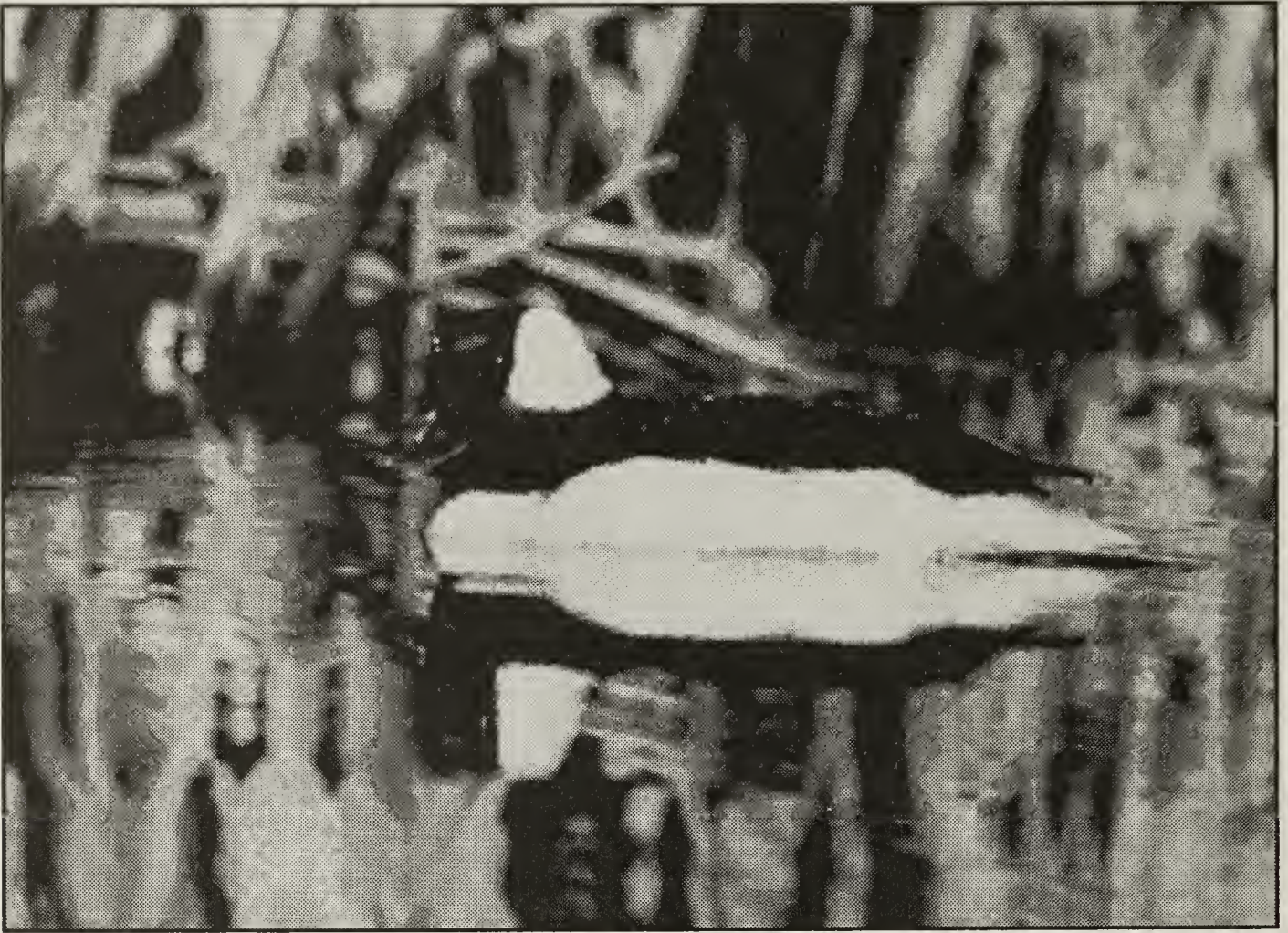
On the foggy night of November 4th, 1940, citizens of Foam Lake, Saskatchewan, were disturbed by strange noises coming from outside their homes.⁸ Rushing outside, they were astonished to find that "a rain of ducks" was taking place. It was a ghoulish rain as some of the ducks had their wings ripped off, or their heads almost severed. Some citizens even "had the unpleasant experience of receiving a Butterball duck right on the head". The carnage lasted from 9:30 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. In the aftermath, four or five hundred ducks were picked up; all were Buffleheads, or Butterballs, as they were known colloquially. Birds were also picked up at Elfros, 18 miles northwest, and at Sheho, 18 miles southeast of Foam Lake, in a path pointing ESE (Fig. 1). Some had hit telephone wires and other obstacles, while others were uninjured. According to Dr. Chant of Foam Lake, there was a heavy fog but no snow on the ground, and there were no authentic observations of ice on the birds' plumage. The ducks were exceedingly fat, and both males and females were involved. Dr. Chant surmised that they had been weakened by a long flight and confused by the town lights. He noted that two survivors, released on water the next morning, would not fly. These facts were obtained by Mr. H.S. Swallow and published in the *Canadian Field-Naturalist* at the onset of the Second World War.⁸ The incident might have been forgotten, if an enthusiastic student

of Buffleheads, Dr. Tony Erskine, had not mentioned it in his classic *Buffleheads*.⁵

Sixty years later I mentioned the story to my father, R.G. Finley, who lives on the western side of the province. I was surprised that he remembered it, though not too surprised, since he used to be a waterfowl hunter and one of the original Keemen with Ducks Unlimited.^a He recalled that the accident was due to fog or sleet and the effect of streetlights that made the town appear like a lake. Still, I was puzzled by some of the facts and the explanation for the disaster, and wondered whether the event was remembered by the people around Foam Lake. Who were Swallow and Chant, I wondered.

I began dialing. The SaskTel robot responded, "What city please?" Foam Lake. "What name please?" Chant. Long silence, then a live operator: "I'm sorry there's no listing under that name" I asked her for any number in Foam Lake. "Maybe they might know where he is," I suggested half-truthfully. "Okay," she said gamely. "Under W, here's White, Kevin, on the farm. Stand by please for the number." This is just post-New Year's, post -Y2K.

I dialed, imagining some unsuspecting farmer on a clear cold night on the lonesome prairie, maybe watching *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* on television. "Hello, your name has been chosen at random, if you



Bufflehead

P. Nicklen

remember the year of the Butterball Crash, press # to win." A young woman answered. I stumbled. "Hello, I'm looking for a Chant, Dr. Chant, maybe he's dead now but ..., actually its about an event that happened in 1940." Mercifully she didn't hang up, but said that she'd been born nearly thirty years too late anyway. She recalled that Dr. Chant was the dentist and mayor. What event, she wondered. A rain of butterballs, I thought. "A forced landing of ducks," I replied. "Have you ever heard of Buffleheads?" She hadn't. "Was there a Swallow living around there?" I asked. Just barn swallows. She referred me to a local duck hunter, Ralph Hollowaty.

He hadn't heard of the event either but he knew what Buffleheads were, that they were uncommon, passing through only in migration. He referred me to local historian, Inge Helgason. She hadn't heard about the event either - her Icelandic family had arrived after

the war - but she volunteered to query some elders and search the archives for back issues of the local news.

The coffee shop must have buzzed. Soon Ruth Guschulak, chairperson of the local historical society, contacted me. She said that there were very few pioneers left but she had found two fellows who still recalled the event. They were in their eighties or nineties. We talked a little about the history of the area. I learned that Sheho and Elfros were Icelandic communities. She said that the actual Foam Lake is really an alkaline slough, dry in some years, so named by settlers for its brown foam in wetter years. She said that it was now part of a heritage marsh project by Ducks Unlimited.

Mr. Willie Baptist was a drayman for the CPR railway at the time. He said that he was called to work in the morning to clean up the mess of ducks in the railway

yards. The bodies of “mallards, greenbacks and teals” were found around the station platform; it was the only brightly-lit area in the town, he thought. He couldn’t recall whether bodies were found outside the town. There were few lights back in those days, he said, and the rural area was mostly dark. The ducks had hit wires around the water tower and the arm of a baggage davit. He thought that the accident was due to a freezing rain; the ducks had ice on their bills and heads. I asked him if they ate the ducks but he couldn’t recall. “Were there any Butterballs?”, I asked, thinking of the cold turkey still in our fridge, “some people know them as Buffleheads.” He said that he didn’t know his ducks very well, but that there were different types, “maybe greenbacks and teals.”

Mr. Robert Borrowman still lives on the family farm a mile west of Foam Lake. “Chant was the dentist and the mayor,” he said “but he was involved in a lot more. I think maybe the hotel in Sheho and some other businesses.” Local mover and shaker, I gather. He thought that the accident was due to sleet or an ice storm. The ducks were scattered across the country from Elfros to the southeast. They were found around the CPR station in Foam Lake. “I saw them in the morning in the pasture. Maybe a couple dozen, rolling around on the ground. They had ice on their beaks and over their eyes,” he said. “Different kinds, like greenbacks, mallards and teals.” I asked whether he had ever heard of a Bufflehead or Butterball. He hadn’t. “They were small ducks, smaller than mallards, brown and white – not your common duck, they were from the northern forests.” I told him what my father had heard about the effects of fog or sleet and the town lights, making it look like a lake. He replied “There was no snow on the ground yet, it was before Remembrance Day, but I think there

was a freezing shower in the evening.” I asked him whether farm lights might have been a factor in the rural groundings. “Oh gawd no,” he stated emphatically, “the countryside was dark in those days, there weren’t any yardlights like now. They were flying high, trying to go south, when they must’ve iced up. You should talk to Dr. Houston, that bird fellow in Saskatoon, he’d know all about it.”

I called Dr. Stuart Houston. Of course he remembered hearing about the event, though he was just a teenager living in Yorkton at the time. Swallow was the chiropractor with his office next to Houston and Houston on Broadway in Yorkton. “The business signs read in order : Houston and Houston, Swallow, Small, Guy.” “Truly,” he said, anticipating my skepticism “It was recorded in Ripley’s *Believe it or Not* .” Anyway, Chant, the dentist, told Swallow the chiropractor, about the event, and Mrs. Priestly, (founder of the Yorkton Natural History Society, forerunner of Nature Saskatchewan), encouraged him to submit it to the *Canadian Field-Naturalist*. A web of movers and shakers, I gather. Dr. Houston recalled that several hundred birds were picked up across the countryside, and he thought that the toll was probably much higher. I said that I couldn’t understand how it was that the ducks ended up strewn over a rural area if lights were the main factor in their demise. Just then the phone went dead and I lost contact. And so I closed another circuit for it was Dr. Houston who encouraged me to write my first natural history note for the *Blue Jay* ⁷.

I also consulted Tom Sterling. He was a waterfowl biologist with Ducks Unlimited who tromped around the Quill Lakes during the 1950s. Like me, he was a prairie farm boy and a waterfowl hunter, so we had much to talk about.

He hadn't heard of the incident; it occurred before his time. Besides, he said, he wasn't that familiar with Buffleheads, or other divers for that matter. He thought that he had heard about a nocturnal crash involving scaups. Divers were more likely than puddlers to be night migrants. He recalled great hunts for Canvasbacks as they left the Quill Lake marshes at dusk, headed out in advance of a big freeze. This was back in the fifties when the Quills were famed for waterfowl, attracting many American hunters. I asked him whether local people would know a Bufflehead by name. A few observant ones, he thought, but beyond that, ducks, particularly diving ducks, were often nameless. Divers, like scaups, were sometimes called butterballs. I mentioned that Buffleheads were also known as the Spirit Duck. He hadn't heard of any other incident of forced landing due to icing, but whatever the cause, he said, it must have been a remarkable event - just think of the interplay of factors. Indeed, the timing of their departure, the development of a frontal system, their cruising altitude, that fatal juncture of dew point, and the bright lights of Foam Lake.

We talked about the early success of Ducks Unlimited in connecting with rural people through its Keemen Program. In particular, he mentioned the role of Bert Cartwright, "a biologist-naturalist, not one of your typical bean counters" who was head of DU's Ecological Department in 1938. He lamented the gulf that seems to exist between institutional biologists and rural people.

Amazingly, Inge Helgason located the anecdote in the archives. It made the front page of the Western Review, Thursday, November 7th 1940, though you'd be hard pressed to find it, preoccupied as it was with war, Remembrance Day, municipal elections,

and a shower for the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Sigurdur Sigbjornson.² It appeared as the last item under the Foam Lake Locals :

*"The bill of fare for Foam Lake residents has consisted largely of wild duck this week for on Tuesday morning literally hundreds of them were to be found in the streets, alleys, backyards and all over town. It seems that the ducks had made a "forced landing" during the night, owing perhaps to sleet and exhaustion and were unable to continue their flight."*²

There was no mention of anyone receiving a butterball on the head.

I was surprised to learn that the paper, now called the Foam Lake Review, was still being published. So I fed the story back as letter to the editor, hoping to snag some additional memories.

Kris Bildfell responded. Though he no longer lives in Saskatchewan, he still subscribes to the hometown news. His uncle, Mr. Lucht, used to be the publisher of the paper. He vividly remembered the event. At the time he was a teenager, living on a farm two and a half miles northwest of the town. It was an awful sight, he recalled, many of the birds had their wings or heads ripped off, after hitting wires and other objects. When he arrived at school, he and other boys were sent out to dispatch the wounded. Many were hiding in the tall grass around the schoolyard. He didn't know their name, just that they were unusual and small like teals. I asked him whether the bill of fare for the townsfolk was roast duck. He didn't think so; they were told not to eat them because it was uncertain what was wrong with them, war and Halloween and all. I asked him about the icing hypothesis and whether the birds were strewn across the country. He didn't recall that there was any ice

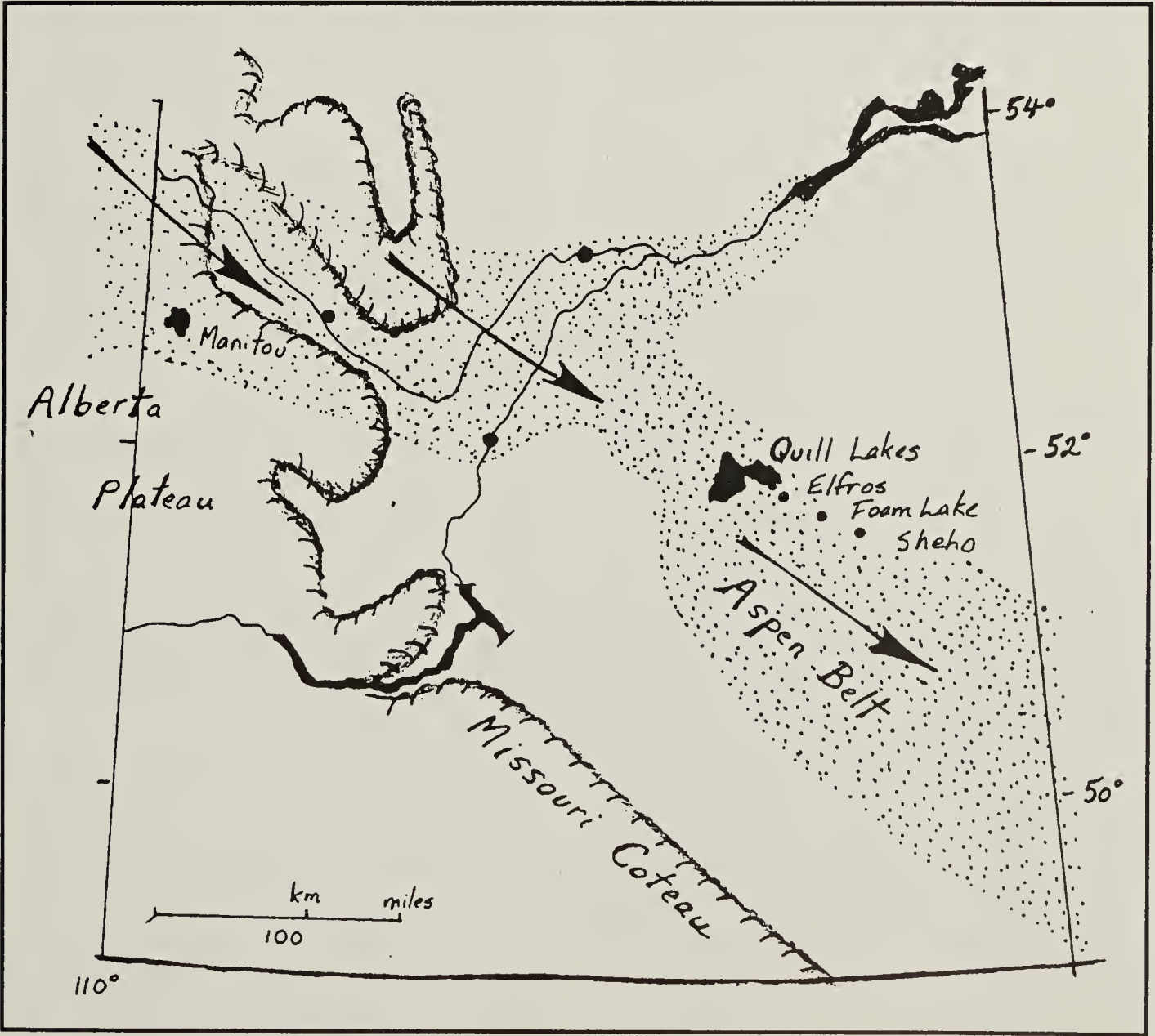
on the ducks but he was confident that the birds were found only in the town, particularly around the brightly-lit area of the "creamery yard". I asked him whether anyone had received a butterball on the head. He hadn't heard of it, nor had anyone else I talked to.

The Great Bufflehead Crash of 1940 was a remarkable event. Swallow's account is still echoed in the verbal knowledge of the few elders in Saskatchewan. Local knowledge, an anecdote in the *Blue Jay* or the *Canadian Field-Naturalist*, when woven together with scientific facts, provides the warp and weft of natural history. Swallow's account was incorporated into *Buffleheads*, the monograph by Dr.

Erskine, and became part of the lore of this interesting species.

The drama and mechanics of waterfowl migration greatly impressed Erskine. "Anyone, whether hunter or not, who watches the duck flocks pouring out of the north during a mass migration in the fall can hardly fail to be thrilled with the sight."⁶ Yet he could only imagine Bufflehead migration since it occurred at night; the crash at Foam Lake gave him an inkling of the nocturnal peregrinations of his subject, which he worked into his thesis concerning weather patterns. The timing of the crash was consistent with peak movements in early November through U.S. National Wildlife Refuges,

Figure 1. Conjectured migration route of Buffleheads across the aspen parkland belt of Saskatchewan on the evening of November 4th, 1940.



following major polar fronts sweeping over the Canadian prairies. Storm riders, their mass exodus signifies the real end of autumn, when the accumulated energy of large sloughs slips below zero on the surface.

Let's take a few more facts, some personal experience, and spin the scenario again.

Last of the waterfowl to remain on the breeding grounds, Buffleheads fatten up through October, packing on as much as 115 grams of stored fat for their flight.^{5,6} No wonder they're called butterballs, that's nearly a third of their weight! Just before freeze-up they aggregate on the larger sloughs, feeding voraciously, waiting for a boost from the first major arctic gale. Rafting together in late afternoon, they find shelter on the lee shore, then at dusk they taxi to the centre of the slough, face about, and take off in squadrons, banking sharply off the northwest winds, quickly achieving cruising speed. They head southeast, following the aspen parkland belt toward their wintering grounds on the Atlantic coast. The squadrons form a phalanx of storm riders that pours off the Alberta plateau and flows down the North Saskatchewan River valley. Let's say their departure time on November 4th is 1715h, somewhere between latitude 53 and 54, and centered around longitude 110. They take a SE bearing of 110°, and rise to an altitude of 1.5 km to take maximum advantage of the wind.¹ Their cruising speed is 65 km/hour, boosted to around 100. Fact: although Buffleheads banded on their breeding grounds in east-central Alberta have been shot in 36 states and five provinces, none has yet been recovered in Saskatchewan and only one in Montana, which suggests that these areas are crossed in a single flight.⁶ Erskine thought that Buffleheads

flew through the night, "although bright moonlight might permit them to land earlier".⁵ By dawn they could be on Lake Erie, but on this particular night some strange brew of weather catches them over Saskatchewan. Around 2100h, the vanguard pass over the steaming Quill Lakes and enter into a dense fog. First Elfros, then the bright lights of Foam Lake, then Sheho, they become disoriented, crashing in a band pointing ESE. The citizens, tuned into the war news, are unaware that the Spirit Ducks are about to descend. A rain of butterballs takes them by surprise.

Next morning, those rescued refuse to fly. Why? Because they were programmed to fly at night, guided by the constellations. Many bird species migrate under the cover of night with the aid of favourable winds, and many millions are fatally attracted like moths to artificial lights. Combine bad weather and the results can be disastrous, particularly around tall structures. For example, on a foggy September weekend in 1981, more than 10,000 passerines collided with floodlit smokestacks at Ontario Hydro's generating station on Lake Erie.³ Most of the major disasters involve passerines.

Buffleheads continue to take the long route (round trip of about 6000 kilometres) to their Atlantic wintering grounds, across an increasingly illuminated landscape, yet neither their timing nor the particular circumstances of weather have been as congruent as that fateful night in 1940.

From Elfros to Sheho the Butterballs traveled.

Like Ariadne's thread the web unraveled.

^a R.G. Finley of Luseland, Sask. received an award for sixty years of service. "Keemen" were farmers and

ranchers with an interest in waterfowl conservation who reported on environmental conditions and waterfowl populations.

Acknowledgements

To Houston and Houston, Swallow, Small, Guy, add Chant, Priestley, Erskine, White, Hollowaty, Helgason, Guschulak, Baptist, Borrowman, Sterling, Bildfell and my own, R.G. Finley. Thanks to Dr. C.S. Houston and the Leightons for editorial input. In memory of J.B. Gollop

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3. Bower, J. 2000. The dark side of light. *Audubon Magazine* March/April Vol. 102 (2): 92-97

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5. Erskine, A.J. 1971. Buffleheads. Canadian Wildlife Service Monograph Series #4. Information Canada, Ottawa. 240 p.

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7. Finley, J. K. 1972. A 1921 photograph of whooping crane. *Blue Jay* 30:151.

8. Swallow, H.S. 1941. Rain of ducks at Foam Lake, Saskatchewan. *Canadian Field-Naturalist*. 55: 130.



"I have procured some of the mice mentioned in my former letters, a young one and a female with young, both of which I have preserved in brandy. From the colour, shape, size and manner of nesting, I make no doubt but that the species is nondescript. They never enter into houses. They breed as many as eight at a litter, in a little round nest composed of the blades of grass or wheat."

Gilbert White, *The Natural History of Selbornel*, 1789.
(First description of the Harvest Mouse, *Micromys minutus*)

THE JOYS OF URBAN BIRDING: REGINA'S A. E. WILSON PARK

H. D. (SANDY) AYER, 1278 Campbell St., Regina, SK S4T 5P7,
hdayer@cbccts.sk.ca



Figure 1. Looking across the s.e. end of A.E. Wilson Park, from the author's back yard.
Eric Greenway

I am a birder because of A. E. Wilson Park. It all started in the summer of 1985, our second in Regina. One afternoon, as I was walking along the south bank of Wascana Creek, I was captivated by a small flock of terns diving bill-first into the water only a few metres away. A few days later I caught sight of an American Bittern, posing stock-still with neck stretched skyward (like a photo out of *National Geographic*), among the reeds by the southernmost storm sewer outfall. Here I was, uprooted from beautiful, mountainous, forested British Columbia, transplanted into the midst of the apparently desolate prairie – and the place was teeming with birds! – birds I'd never been aware of in my native province. (I later learned that Saskatchewan "boasts with the other two Prairie Provinces of having

Canada's richest assemblage of breeding birds"³). The magic of those early days – when every second bird was a life bird – has dissipated somewhat, but the joy of seeing some new aspect of bird behavior, and the thrill of adding new species to my checklist for the park, remain.

The park, which is situated in northwestern Regina, was officially dedicated in June, 1987.² It is named after A. E. (Albert Edward) "Bert" Wilson (1908-1969), a Regina alderman who was a staunch advocate of parks and a supporter of Regina's northwest. Covering 80 hectares, it extends along both sides of Wascana Creek from Dewdney Avenue in the southeast to Ritter Avenue in the northwest (Fig. 2). As the largest park administered by the City of Regina (Wascana Park, which

is larger, is administered by the Wascana Centre Authority), it is regarded by the city's Parks Department as something of a showcase for its multi-use philosophy of parks management. Indeed, the park includes not only a variety of wildlife habitats, but also tennis courts, a soccer pitch, two playgrounds, a canoe-launching dock, sewage pumping stations, and a heavily-used 4 km stretch of Regina's pathway/bikeway system. A master plan, adopted by city council in 1989, includes a number of elements that have not been implemented because of lack of funds. Among these is a complex including shops, markets, restaurants, and boat rental that was to have been built on a site adjacent to Rick Hansen Park (a playground on the north side of the park).

As far as wildlife habitat is concerned, the park contains a variety of human-made mini-environments, two of which were designed expressly to celebrate the diversity of Saskatchewan's ecosystems. Boreal Island, with its plantings of larch,

spruce, and chunks of bog from Prince Albert, is intended to replicate the boreal forest, while Prairie Island just to the south, when fully developed, will become a microcosm of prairie grassland. The two islands, along with the hills along the east side of the park, were created between 1977 and 1980 by dredging and widening the creek. The original channel runs along the south side of both islands. The widening of the creek also served to increase its capacity to absorb spring runoff and the ever-increasing outflow from storm sewers in the rapidly developing nearby subdivisions. Weirs at each end of the park stabilize the water level during dry periods.

The sincerity of the Parks Department in seeking to make A. E. Wilson Park hospitable to birds and other wildlife can be seen from its decision to naturalize certain areas of the park. Large areas of grassland are left unmowed in summer to provide habitat for Western Meadowlarks and other grassland species. Unfortunately, this well-intentioned policy has backfired to

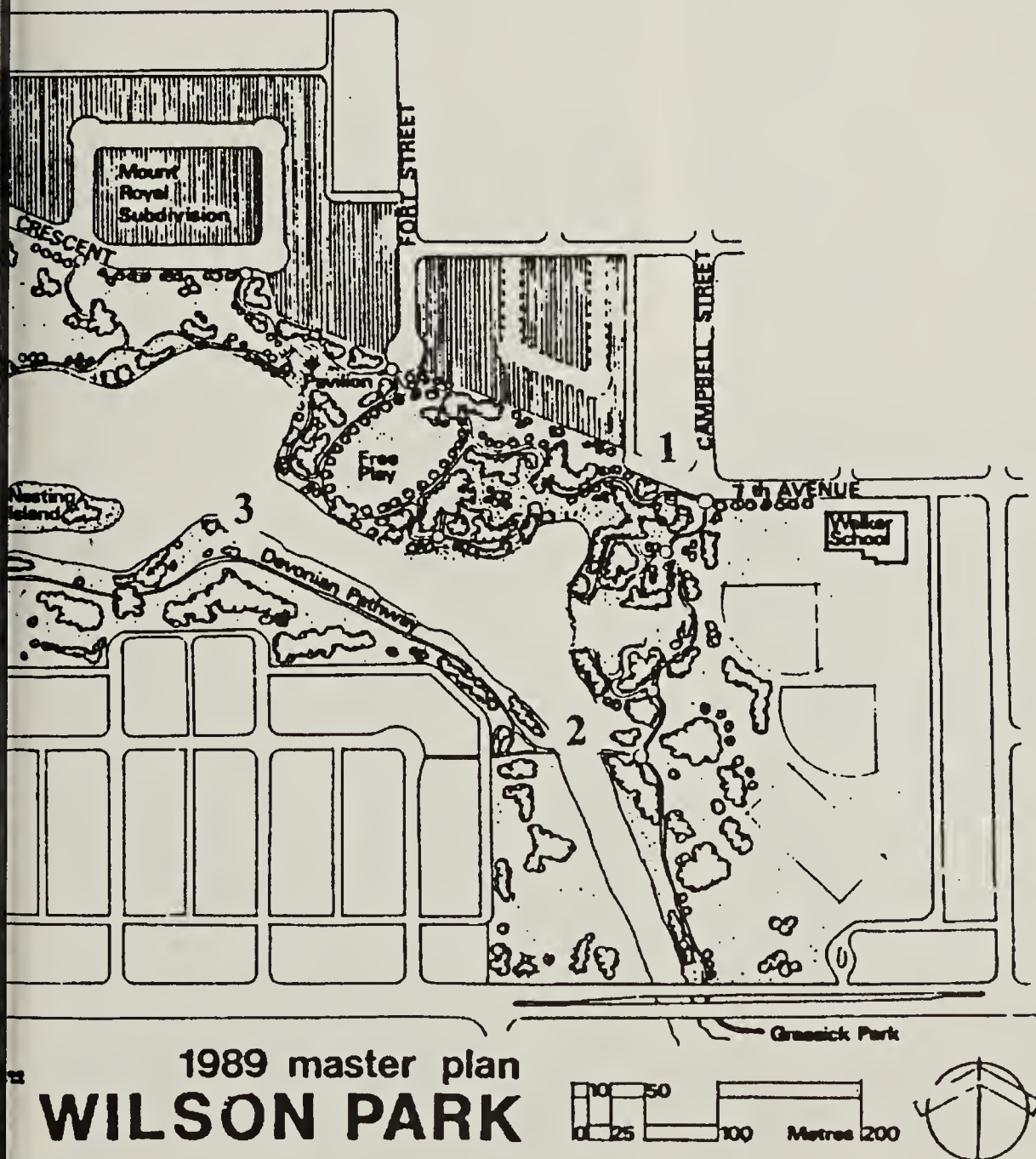


Figure 3. South footbridge and weir

Eric Greenway



Figure 2. Map of A.E.Wilson Park
(adapted from the City of Regina Central Services' 1989 Master Plan).



a certain extent since it allows weeds such as knapweed, clover, dock, burdock, and thistle to proliferate. Knapweed has already become a serious pest, having taken over significant chunks of former grassland. On a more ominous note, purple loosestrife, the hardy and prolific garden plant that has taken over numerous marshes in the western and eastern parts of the continent, has begun to turn up on Boreal Island. Fortunately, the parks maintenance department has so far managed to keep this scourge in check, but its presence is a reminder of the fragility of this riparian jewel of a park.

There are many places adjacent to the park where you can simply park your vehicle and walk in. However, I usually begin my birding forays at the 7th Avenue and Campbell Street entrance because it adjoins my house (map location 1). In fact, I like to regard A. E. Wilson Park as an extension of my back yard. At any rate, starting where I do allows me to bird most of the park in the early morning with the sun pretty well at my back. I start by heading down the paved path that extends from the foot of Campbell Street to a footbridge over a weir about 400 metres to the southwest (map location 2).

The bridge (Fig. 3) is a great place to stop for an extended look and listen, but I've had enough close calls with cyclists and in-line skaters that I make sure to stand well back from the asphalt "bike path" that rings the park. Western Meadowlarks are usually singing in the vicinity from early spring until late summer, as are Eastern Kingbirds. Loggerhead Shrikes may have nested in the elms just to the southeast in 1988. That summer I observed one in our back yard pecking at my two-year-old son's running shoes that we'd hung out to dry on our clothesline.

Loggerhead Shrikes still occasionally show up in May in the more westerly portions of the park.

Barn Swallows nest in the nearby culvert, and in the spring and summer they are joined by Tree Swallows and Purple Martins, both of which nest in nearby yards. Common Yellowthroats—they seem to sing "wot'sis 'ere?" instead of the more usual and prosaic "witchity, witchity, witchity"—and Song Sparrows often inhabit the thick willows and reeds on the south shore, as do the ubiquitous Red-winged Blackbirds. This dense foliage often shelters several species of sparrows during migration. They respond readily to pishing, provided one is not squeamish about pishing in public.

In the summer of 1999 a Hooded Merganser spent a few days fishing about 50 metres downstream from the bridge. Red-breasted and Common mergansers have also shown up in almost the same spot on a couple of occasions in the early spring. The same stretch of water usually harbors the more common migrating ducks and grebes. During the summer, Mallards, Northern Shovelers, American Wigeon, Blue-winged Teal and their young predominate. American Avocets are regular in spring, and every couple of years in early August local residents get a real treat when a small flock of American White Pelicans touches down. The reeds along the shore have sheltered not only the American Bittern mentioned above, but also, on a couple of occasions, a Black-crowned Night-Heron. Soras can be heard whinnying or giving their incessant "doo-wick" call, and, in fall, Common Snipe sometimes flush from the shallows. This is also one of the best places in the park to see Rusty Blackbirds (in the fall).

For a couple of years during the mid-'90s, there was a small sandbar on the shore opposite the culvert. It attracted the expected Spotted Sandpipers (which apparently breed in the park) and Greater Yellowlegs as well as the far less common Lesser Yellowlegs and, in fall, the occasional Long-billed Dowitcher. Unfortunately, this sandbar was removed a few years ago so that it wouldn't clog the floodway, and I haven't seen the latter species in the park since.

After crossing the footbridge, I head west, all the while scanning the trees in the back yards to my left. My next stop is the bay 150 metres to the north (map location 3). This bay and the one just to the east were dredged out in 1988. Willets, American Avocets, and the occasional Solitary Sandpiper can be seen along the shore in spring; these give way to Spotted Sandpipers and Greater Yellowlegs in summer, and Common Snipe and Green-winged Teal in the fall. In spring the bay is also one of the best places to see Ring-necked Ducks (rare), Bufflehead,

Canvasback, Lesser Scaup, and the other diving ducks. In August and September, large mixed flotillas of Mallards, Northern Shovelers, Gadwall, and Blue-winged Teal – some numbering more than 200 individuals – gather in the bay prior to fall migration. I always examine these flocks carefully for rarer species such as Wood Duck, which have appeared here three times over the past five years.

The grassy area to the south and west of the creek is studded with elm and ash trees in which Eastern Kingbirds have occasionally nested. Western Kingbirds generally perch in the trees closer to the McCarthy Street bridge. Following the path as it twists south and then west, I scan the treed area in the hope of seeing (during May, at least), a Rose-breasted Grosbeak or a repeat of the Blue-headed Vireo and the female Eastern Bluebird that appeared here on 18 May 1997. Perhaps the latter bird was the same one that visited my back yard for five days thereafter. I also give the denser brush along the creek a good looking

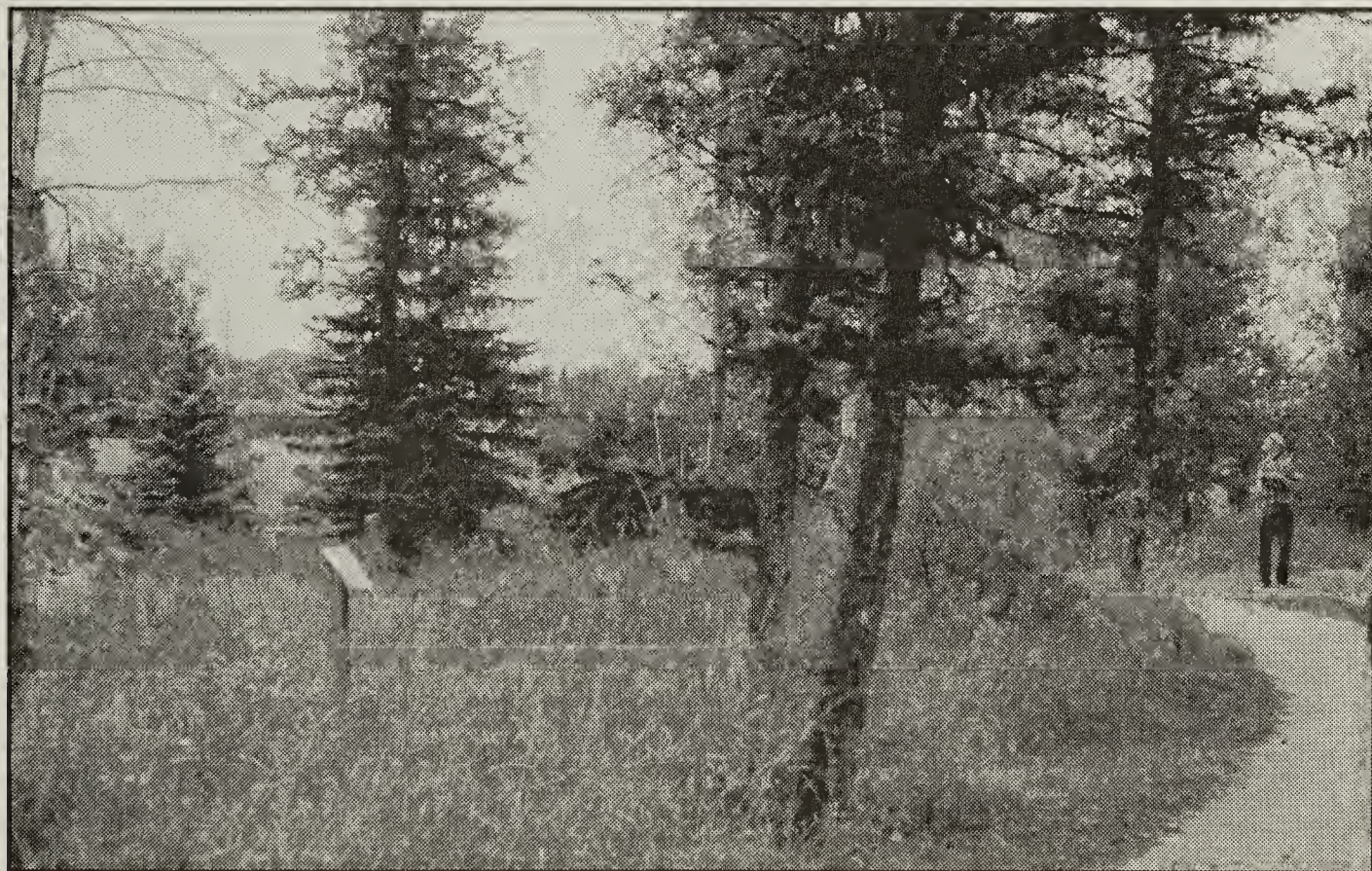


Figure 4. Boreal Island, center trail

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over, because it often holds warblers, sparrows, vireos, and kingbirds.

Heading west under the McCarthy Street bridge, I make for the thickets of Red-osier Dogwood, buffaloberry, willow, and lilac on the far side (map location 4). These bushes attract such passerines as the Magnolia Warbler I saw on the May 1998 bird count and, in September and October, Orange-crowned Warblers and a variety of sparrows. These species tend to respond well to pishing, as did the Winter Wren I flushed on 30 September 2000. This spot is also a favorite haunt of the skulkier species, such as Brown Thrasher.

About 100 metres beyond a bridge over a small drainage ditch that marks the end of the dense cover, a sign at a crossroads announces that the pathway through A. E. Wilson Park forms part of the Trans-Canada Trail. To the right of the sign lies the footbridge to Prairie Island (map location 5). Before crossing the bridge, I usually take a good look at the flocks of ducks that dabble in the channel between the

island and the south shore of the creek because, well, you never know when a Garganey might turn up. The low bushes on the far side of the bridge often shelter sparrows, and the nearby dead cottonwood is a favorite perch for everything from warblers to magpies. The expanse of water to the north is the widest and deepest stretch of creek in the park and a favorite haunt of diving ducks and grebes. I observed a Red-necked Grebe here among a flock of Horned Grebes in April 1998, and I'm eager to see whether a Clark's Grebe might put in an appearance one of these springs.

A footbridge at the west end of Prairie Island (map location 6), leads to the most productive location in the entire park – Boreal Island (map location 7 and Fig. 4). The diversity and relative density of the vegetation on the island attract such breeding species as Yellow Warbler, Baltimore Oriole, Song Sparrow, Mourning Dove, Cedar Waxwing, and Warbling Vireo. This feature also makes it a hangout for migrating warblers and sparrows.



Figure 5. Looking north to the footbridge. The tip of Sparrow Finger is on the right and Prospect Corner is in the upper left.

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“Sparrow Finger”, which is what I call the narrower northwestern end (map location 8), is especially good for sparrows. Among the more uncommon warblers that have shown up on the island are: Chestnut-sided, Cape May, Connecticut, and Nashville; among the more uncommon sparrows: Swamp, LeConte’s, Fox, and Golden-crowned. The latter bird, observed on Sparrow Finger on 26 and 27 April 1998, turned out to be the sixth recorded sighting for Regina, and the twenty-third for Saskatchewan. Other birds of note that have turned up here are Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Alder Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Northern Shrike, Blue Jay, Purple Finch, and White-winged Crossbill. In fall, Merlins sometimes zoom low just above the gravel path that encircles Sparrow Finger so as to surprise Greater Yellowlegs feeding along the shore.

The gravel path across Boreal Island divides just after it leaves the bridge from Prairie Island: one half swings northeast through the low willows and spruces along the

creekside, while the other cuts through the taller trees and denser brush of the center of the island. In the early morning it’s best to take the creekside route, so that you can have the sun at your back as you scan the brush and trees to the west. I’ll often bird this path as far as the center of the island and then double back and bird along the interior trail before taking a couple of turns around Sparrow Finger.

Boreal Island tends to blow hot or cold however, and when it’s blowing cold I head for the strip of low trees and bushes across the creek to the southwest (map location 9). Warblers often forage here, and once I even saw a Blue-headed Vireo, but my most memorable experience in this location was seeing eight Brown Thrashers emerge one by one from a thicket alongside the chainlink fence at the edge of the park.

After crossing the bridge from Boreal Island to the mainland, I take a right turn, stopping at the promising patch of conifers opposite Sparrow Finger. It



Figure 6. Looking north into The Bower.

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has produced Chestnut-sided Warblers, but normally holds very little in the way of avian life apart from Chipping Sparrows and House Finches. This is, however, the highest spot in the park (map location 10) – I call it “Prospect Corner” – and thus an ideal vantage point from which to scan the northern and western horizons and the sky overhead. Since many birds in transit seem to follow the creek, you never know what might show up: Broad-winged and Cooper’s Hawks, Great Blue Heron, and Sandhill Crane are all possibilities at the right time of year.

After another 50 metres or so the path divides; one route leads west and another east across a footbridge (map location 11 and Fig. 5). I normally don’t cross this bridge unless I notice a raptor on the three tall trees across the creek to the north. A large group of Burrowing Owls once bred in the hilly area just to the east of the trees according to a long-time (human) resident of the area.

About 20 metres west of the intersection lies one of the most delightful sections of the park, a bower of willows that forms an arch over the path (map location 12 and Fig. 6). I observed a Philadelphia Vireo here during the May 1999 bird count, and the willows also shelter warblers, Western Kingbirds, Baltimore Orioles, migrant thrushes, and the occasional Spotted Towhee. The sandy beach that comes into view on the far side of the bower often holds ducks, gulls, and shorebirds, and the occasional surprise, like the lone Snow Goose that once showed up in a flock of Canada Geese. I use the conifers bordering the creek as a blind because the waterfowl and shorebirds in this neck of the park tend to spook easily. And since the creek is quite wide and deep at this spot it attracts diving ducks during migration. Wilson’s Phalarope and Surf Scoter

have turned up here, and the far shore has produced Common Snipe and other shorebirds.

The path then snakes its way to Ritter Avenue, at the park’s northern limit. Western Meadowlarks and kingbirds often perch in the widely-scattered trees in the field to the south. If Common Grackles are feeding in the grass just to the east of the power line, I always scrutinize the flock for the more dainty Brewer’s Blackbirds. The bridge itself (map location 13) and the nearby power lines serve as perches for migrating Belted Kingfishers, and the weir just to the east is a favorite feeding-place of Willet, Greater Yellowlegs, and Spotted Sandpiper.

To the west and south of the bridge is a grassy field that I call “LeConte’s Field” (map location 14), because of the LeConte’s Sparrows that usually reside here from late May until mid-September. Towards mid-summer they are joined by Sedge Wrens, which are at times surprisingly tame. A very vocal group of three once made its way through the two-metre-high grass to within a metre of me. Bobolinks often show up during spring migration and have occasionally stayed for the summer. All three species are probable breeders. Common Yellowthroats, Song Sparrows, and Clay-colored Sparrows also inhabit, and likely breed in, the grasses and creekside reeds.

Leconte’s Field is also one of the best places in the park to see raptors, which sometimes perch on fence posts or in the belt of trees to the west that shields the Paul Dojack Centre from view. Northern Harrier, Red-tailed, Swainson’s, and Cooper’s hawks, American Kestrel, Merlin, and Short-eared Owl all frequent the area. Also of note was a Nelson’s Sharp-tailed Sparrow that appeared one September.

Swallows feed overhead, and the monotonous two-note call of the Purple Martin can invariably be heard from May through August. The martins share a martin house just to the south with House Sparrows.

Having reached the top end of my circuit at this point, I head back over the field, staying close to the houses in Dieppe Place, to look for birds I didn't see on the way up. I then revisit Boreal Island and, if pressed for time, make my way to the McCarthy Street bridge and head home along the north bank of the creek. I usually bird only the south bank because it has more trees and better habitat overall. However, the north bank has yielded a few uncommon to rare birds such as Mountain Bluebird, Loggerhead Shrike, Say's Phoebe, and, on 12 August 1997, one very disoriented Upland Sandpiper.

During the dog days of summer the number (usually around 40) and variety of species seen on each visit remain fairly constant, but there are always new avian experiences to be had: a mock attack by a Purple Martin when I strayed too near its house; an Eastern Kingbird whacking a dragonfly against a tree (presumably to ensure its demise and to soften it up) before feeding it to its young; and a Great Horned Owl roosting in dense foliage, its presence betrayed by shrieking Robins.

By contrast, spring migration regularly brings a rich fallout of diverse and unexpected species. May 19, 2000, is a case in point, providing not only abundance (57 species, a personal best single day total) but two rarities: a first-year male Chestnut-sided Warbler on Boreal Island and a Hooded Merganser on the creek to the east.

A. E. Wilson Park's checklist of 169 species includes 19 species of

sparrow and 18 species of warbler, and compares favorably with those of three parks in Saskatoon that receive mention in the latest edition of *A Bird-Finding Guide to Canada*.¹ During spring, summer, and fall it also rivals Regina's Wascana Park, as far as the number of observable species is concerned. In 1997 the park was added to the sites to be covered in the city's May bird count, but visits by serious birdwatchers continue to be as rare as Northern Shrikes or Blue Jays. Perhaps, as its trees mature, it will come to play Medina to Wascana Park's Mecca in the minds of local birders.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Eric Greenway, Trevor Herriot, and Diane Ayer, each of whom proofread the manuscript and offered editorial suggestions. Eric also took the photographs used in the article. Longtime Dieppe Place resident Ed Lamb filled me in on the history of the development of the park and contributed the sighting record for Burrowing Owl. Lloyd Isaak, Coordinator of Landscape Design and Capital Planning with the City of Regina, contributed information on the city of Regina's master plan for the park. Other background information on the park was provided by Ivan J. Saunders, City of Regina Archivist; Janine Daradich, City of Regina Community Services, and the staff of the Regina Public Library's Prairie History Room.

1. Finlay, J. Cam, Ed. 2000. *A Bird-finding Guide to Canada*. McClelland and Stewart, Toronto

2. Realistic Environment Recreated. *Regina Leader-Post*, 8 June 1987.

3. Smith, Alan R., 1996. *Atlas of Saskatchewan Birds*. Saskatchewan Natural History Society, Regina. p.8.

FOURTH OF JULY BUTTERFLY COUNTS IN SASKATCHEWAN – 1997 - 1999

J. B. GOLLOP¹

The 25th annual 4th of July Counts (4JCs) – the only international survey of butterflies in Canada, the United States and Mexico – were held in 1999. They are organized by the North American Butterfly Association and are usually conducted within a month of 4 July. Like Christmas Bird Counts, they are 1-day counts done within a 24-km-diameter circle. With the bird counts, 10 or more parties are usual per count in much of the continent so that each area is thoroughly surveyed. Saskatchewan's 1-3 parties per butterfly count can only handle a fraction of the circle. 4JCs are also comparable to Breeding Bird Surveys (BBS) in that they are 1-day counts at the peak of the breeding season, although the BBS is conducted along a 25-mile route, half a mile wide and one observer spends three minutes at each of 50 stops to record all birds seen *and heard*. It occupies 12.5 sq mi compared to the 177 for the circle.

Like the BBS, a 4JC is not an adequate indicator of the animal population that year because all species are not at their peak on any one day (some butterflies have even disappeared as a species for the year and others have not yet arrived) and because weather significantly affects counts from year to year in both cases. For birds, the saving grace is the number of counts which, when combined, helps to offset (or mask) some of the

deficiencies of a single count. There have been about 30 BBSs in Saskatchewan compared to 12 4JCs. Alberta has gone from three 4JCs in 1997 to 13 in 1998 to 28 in 1999. When Saskatchewan reaches that level, we'll be in much better shape.

All of which points to the need for more butterfly surveys in Saskatchewan. The best evaluation of birds or butterflies at a given site, regardless of size or shape, is repeated counts through the season. For birds, with practically all species being present throughout the breeding season, the minimum number per season is considered to be eight counts. Because butterfly species have shorter life spans with few being present all summer, more counts are desirable. For butterflies, counts at two-week intervals from April through September along a km of lane or trail, or checking several flower gardens or crisscrossing a piece of native habitat would be superb - 12 counts for a perfect record (but something - even if you can't identify all species - is infinitely better than nothing).

Which just about gets us to Table 3 - Saskatchewan 4JCs for 1997 through 1999. The table of 1998 and 1997 data in *Saskatchewan Butterflies 1998* should be ignored because there were several errors in it. This year's table is a little closer to perfection.

Table 3A. 4TH OF JULY BUTTERFLY COUNTS - SASKATCHEWAN - 1999/98/97 ::: SPECIES: 69/80/77 = 91

4JC # yrs	Yr	Date	Spp	No. Butt.	Butt/ ph	Obs- erv- ers	Party- hours Total	Party- Hours On foot	Party-km on foot	Party-km by car	Time	% Sun am/pm	Temp deg. C	Wind kph	4JC
Camp Dundurn/ 7	99	Jun 10	21	432	35	2	12.2	12.2	18	0	0900-1640	100/25	14-21	24	Camp
	98	Jun 10	21	163	13	2	12.9	12.9	16	0	0910-1630	90/90	17-26	6-14	Dundurn
	97	Jun 11	23	556	52	2	10.6	10.6	14	0	0925-1605	25/100	19-26	23-40	
Cypress Hills/ 5	99	Jun 23	35	756	47	4	16.2	16.2	27	0	0910-1630	100/25	13-18	24	Cypress
	98	Jun 23	45	1236	82	3	15.1	15.1	27	0	0900-1630	40/70	16-21	10-19	Hills
	97	Jul 3	39	2066	107	2	19.3	19.3	39	0	0850-1730	62/100	11-19	16-24	
Eastend/ 3	99	Jun 22	22	136	8	4	16.3	16.3	21	0	0920-1615	75/25	16-22	32	Eastend
	98	Jun 24	26	493	36	3	13.6	13.6	31	0	0830-1600	50-90	17-25	19-35	
	97	Jul 2	24	220	14	3	15.9	15.9	28	0	0930-1740	0/80	14-18	19	
Fort Qu'Appelle/ 9	99	Jun 18	25	120	15	8	9	8	10	51	0830-1730	100/75	18-23	24	Fort
	98	Jun 25	27	125	16	2	8	7	6	32	0900-1600	100/90	18-26	8-16	Qu'Appelle
	97	Jun 23	32	153	28	2	5.5	4.5	5	19	0900-1430	100/100	18-23	16-32	
Matador/ 5	99	Jun 15	19	695	52	2	13.4	13.4	24	0	0900-1640	90/80	16-24	16-24	Matador
	98	Jun 22	20	311	28	2	11.3	11.3	20	0	0900-1610	100/70	22-24	32-40	
	97	Jun 27	24	607	64	2	9.5	9.5	20	0	0915-1700	100/100	17-23	18-34	
Nisbet Forest/ 5	99	Jul 26	17	357	32	2	11.2	11.2	23	0	0925-1545	100/75	14-22	24	Nisbet
	98	Jul 31	23	629	51	3	12.3	12.3	22	0	0925-1520	100/100	22-28	6-13	Forest
	97	Aug 6	21	370	40	2	9.2	9.2	21	0	0900-1530	100/100	29-33	8-27	
Regina/ 4	99	Jun 17	18	256	22	7	11.5	11.5	11	0	0900-1600	70/60	18-21	25-30	Regina
	98	Jun 23	14	192	15	9	13	13	12	0	0900-1600	45/40	19-25	17-25	
	97	Jun 19	26	517	47	9	11	11	10	0	0900-1500	80/50	16-21	16-24	
Rocanville/ 3	99	Jul 1	26	131	14	2	9.2	9.2	16	0	0900-1600	75/50	15-20	8	Rocanville
	98	Jul 1	22	325	36	2	9.1	9.1	17	0	0945-1620	100-100	23-27	8-16	
	97	Jul 29	20	433	42	2	10.4	10.4	20	0	0915-1605	95/100	20-30	10-35	
Roche Percee/ 3	99	Jul 27	22	764	69	2	11	11	22	0	0835-1625	100/100	20-31	24	Roche
	98	Jul 28	22	866	65	2	13.3	13.3	14	0	1820-1550	50/40	23-27	8-16	Percee
	97	Jul 31	21	611	42	2	9.9	9.9	14	0	0830-1530	100/100	21-30	10-35	
Saskatoon East/ 5	99	Jul 4	22	206	13	8	16.5	16.5	24	0	0920-1920	50/50	14-18	24	Saskatoon
	98	Jul 11	32	593	30	8	19.6	19.6	34	0	0820-1550	90/100	20-29	13-27	East
	97	Jul 12	35	857	35	7	24.3	24.3	26	0	0900-1800	100/100	15-27	10-26	
Sonningdale/ 6	99	Jun 14	25	393	33	2	11.8	11.8	20	0	1000-1630	75/75	15-22	24	Sonningdale
	98	Jun 18	21	386	32	2	12.1	12.1	21	0	0945-1700	50/80	16-19	6-19	
	97	Jun 25	18	511	39	2	13.2	13.2	21	0	0905-1635	60/85	15-23	14-24	
Waskesiu River/ 2	99	Jun 7	23	200	24	2	8.2	8.2	16	0	0850-1430	75/25	15-20	8	Waskesiu
	98	Jun 8	21	215	36	2	6	6	12	0	1040-1655	50/30	8-21	10-19	River

[illegible]

* As corrected from published version by Keith Roney

Table 3B. 4TH OF JULY BUTTERFLY COUNTS - SASKATCHEWAN -1999.98.97 - SPECIES: 69.80.77 = 91

Camp Dundum	Cypress Hills	Eastend	Fort Qu'Appelle	Matador	Nisbet Forest	Regina	For explanation, see text	TOTAL	Rocanville	Roche Percée	Saskatoon East	Sonningdale	Waskesiu River
0.5	1.10		1.15	0.13		0.012	Silver-spotted Large Dark Small Dark Skipper	6.7.26 0.02 4.0.0	1.0.0	1.2.0	2.2.1 0.02		
1.00	3.00						Northern Cloudywing Duskywing Duskywing	21.38.19 53.41.8 51.32.1	2.2.0			5.13.0 1.0.0 1.0.0	4.13 43.29 47.32
10.11	8.83	0.41	1.03	0.42 2.00			Dreamy Afranius Parsius Pyrgus	0.1.3 14.7.2 1.0.0		0.0.1		1.0.0	4.1 1
0.03	7.54		1.01	1.00			Common Checkered Skipper	112.47.88		0.3.0	2.0.1		
1.00	1.00		0.01				Arctic Skipper	17.14.7				11.0.5	4.13
0.12	1.05	0.05	2.00	0.01		2.00	Orange Skipper	7.9.20	0.5.0	0.0.4	0.4.5	4.0.0	
0.10	3.2.14	4.42.24	16.11.14	23.88.58c		4.39.17	Ganta Skipperling	71.187.139	8.0.0		15.4.3	0.0.9	
	0.13.0	0.1.0	0.10	0.2.0			Uncas Skipper	0.1.0				0.1.0	
	0.01			0.1.0			Hesperia Skipper	0.17.0					
	0.10			0.1.0			Nevada Skipper	0.1.1					
	1.1.2						Peck's Skipper	3.4.9	2.0.0		0.3.9	1.0.0	
							Draco Skipper	1.1.2					
0.01	0.2.0		2.2.4			2.0.7	Tawny-edged Skipper	0.12.8	0.1.0	0.0.1	0.11.7	0.7.5	
							Long Dash Skipper	9.15.20	4.2.0		1.2.3		
1.2.8	0.1.0	1.1.0	1.1.0	1.1.0	8.6.2	4.0.16	Delaware Skipper	0.1.0		0.1.0			1.1
0.01	0.02	1.0.0		1.0.0		1.0.2	Hobomok Skipper	17.4.24	1.0.0	17.7.2	0.2.0	6.0.4	0.25
	0.01						Dun Skipper	25.18.6	0.2.2		0.0.1	0.1.0	
							Common Roadside Skipper	9.31.9				4.0.0	
							Dark (Black) Swallowtail	2.1.3				0.1.0	0.3
							Old World Swallowtail	0.3.-					
							Anise Swallowtail	0.0.1					
15.24.51	67.133.68	8.8.0	5.4.12	0.1.0		3.3.4	Canadian Tiger Swallowtail	192.278.261	3.3.0		2.1.1	72.93.125	17.8
1.1.0	5.6.4	4.25.1	1.1.13	1.1.13	2.8.6	2.0.0	White Swallowtail	17.67.116	1.1.23	0.14.24	0.11.45		1
0.50	6.6.1	10.104.8	0.0.1	1.48.52	0.7.24	0.0.11	Western White	23.181.104	5.0.0	1.8.5	0.2.2	0.3.0	
	4.4.0						Margined White	4.4.0					
	0.1.4				0.0.1		Mustard White	0.1.5					
1.1.1	1.0.0	2.3.0	2.4.3	3.24.79	6.2.11	3.5.31	Cabbage White	33.119.414	1.1.38	12.19.8	0.80.243	2.0.0	
1.0.0	1.25.10			0.0.1			Marble Marble	1.0.1					
0.01				20.0.0			Large Marble	1.25.10					
							Olympia Marble	20.0.1					
0.2.12	12.27.35	0.13.9		0.0.19	0.0.8	107.10.10	Sulphur Sulphur	14.45.346	2.0.50	0.0.148	0.0.62	0.3.3	1
77.14.49	17.9.6	22.2.4	13.4.4	124.0.3	3.72.30	0.0.1	Clouded Orange	975.783.467	1.1.108	584.525.140	10.152c.106	18.4.7	
		0.0.1	0.2.0				Queen Alexandra's Sulphur	0.2.3		0.1.1			
	0.0.1		0.1.1				Christina Sulphur	0.0.1		1.0.0	0.0.3	0.2.0	
	0.1.1						Giant Sulphur	1.4.5					
	1.0.10							1.0.10					

Table 3B (p. 2) 4JCs

Camp Dundum	Cypress Hills 0.61	Eastend	Fort Qu'Appelle	Matador	Nisbet Forest	Regina		TOTAL	Rocanville	Roche Percée	Saskatoon East	Sonningdale	Waskegou River
		0.20			0.01		Pink-edged Copper Copper Copper	0.61 0.01 0.02	0.01		0.01		
	0.10		1.11	1.16	1.40 0.12	0.027	Ruddy Dorcas Purplish	0.22 1.40 2.437					
	1.00				2.114		Coral Striped Elfin	2.116 0.21 1.00	0.02 0.20		0.01		
	1.11						Hoary Eastern Pine Western Pine	2.0 6.32 1.11					2.0 6.32
10.12.53	163.261.702	9.98.32		22.7.73	0.10 0.10	2.00	Blue Tailed Blue Azure	285.459.974 0.10	0.51	1.21	12.8.20	62.59.92	14.6
0.3.4	12.25.27	1.60	6.2.4	0.0.5		0.0.4	Western Tailed Blue	47.70.103	1.30		8.20	16.17.59	3.12
							Azure Azure Azure	0.01 5.90 4.01	0.01			1.00	4.9
6.4.6	7.3.10	17c0	5.3.10	1.0.3		18.7.19	Silvery	90.52.71	2.00		17.4.3	26.18.20	7.5
6.3.5	2.3.5	5.12.27	5.5.1	44.16.18	0.10	8.5.7	Melissa	94.54.74	4.00	0.46	18.1.4	0.21	
3.26.33	29.115.94	3.32.18	0.3.10	0.9.17		9.3.75	Greenish	64.231.278	0.7.1		7.4.5	11.30.25c	1.2
	4.7.17						Boisduval's Lupine (Acmon) Blue	4.7.17 0.1.2					
14.2.7	1.1.0	0.0.2 0.1.1	0.1.0 1.0.0			3.0.1	Prairie Arctic	19.5.9			0.1.0		
	6.85.151	2.64.26		0.18.14	29.105.17		Large	75.364.279	12.30.28	18.27.24	8.18.15	0.17.4	
	0.1.0	0.1.0	1.0.0				Variegated	8.5.2	1.1.0	5.1.1	1.1.1		
		0.2.0		0.2.0	12.40.47		Great Spangled	30.118.109	0.4.28	16.18c.23	0.52.13		
	0.6.46	0.0.1			3.10.2		Aphrodite	6.10.7	0.0.2	3.0.3			
	0.4.3	0.6.12	0.9.7	0.19.6			Zerene	0.6.47					
							Callippe	0.44.26	0.20	0.20	0.20		
	4.2.5	0.2.8N1B	0.5.16		0.12.4		Atlantis	0.12.24					
1.3.3	5.9.58				18.5.12	0.1.0	Northwestern	36.35.54	12.7.2	2.1.0	2.10.7	0.2.5c	
1.0.0	0.8.7			0.4.0	0.0.1		Mormon	0.12.6					
18.0.6	14.69.59				1.39.6		Small	11.57.69	0.0.1		0.6.1		4
					6.35.7		Silver-bordered	7.41.9	0.0.3	1.0.1	0.6.2	21.6.3	2
					2.8.8		Meadow	59.86.82			0.5.1		
							Frigga	7.1.-					7.1
							Freija	6.1.-					8.1
					9.107.104		Arctic	9.107.104					
0.2.0	1.1.0		0.0.1	1.0.0		2.0.1	Gorgone	6.4.2			1.1.0	1.0.0	
6.1.2	48.34.262	2.0.0					Sagebrush	7.23.3	0.0.3	5.23.0			
2.0.0	4.4.12	0.3.1			61.27.9	3.0.0	Crescent	146.1164.354	13.26.29	2.37.11	15.20.42	1.13.8	0.3
1.4.2	11.12.22	7.0.0	11.3.1	21.0.2	0.0.1	8.7.2	Pearl	58.19.35	1.0.6	0.4.10c	4.1.1		
	1.1.2	0.0.1	0.38.11	0.1.0	53.36.7	1.0.0	Northern	96.419.136	7.187.16	0.4.0	22.84.45	1.45.34	2.6
			1.6.4		1.0.0		Tawny	5.9.6	1.2.0				

Table 3B (p. 3) 4JCs

Camp Dundrum	Cypress Hills	Eastend	Fort Qu'Appelle	Matador	Nisbet Forest	Regina		TOTAL	Rocanville	Roche Percee	Saskatoon East	Sonningdale	Waskeslu River
99.98.97 10 June. 10.11 Jn	99.98.97 23 June. 24 Jn.3 Jy	99.98.97 22 June. 24 Jn.4 Jy	99.98.97 18 June. 25.23 Jn	99.98.97 15 June. 22.27 Jn	99.98.97 26 July. 31 Jy.6 Au	99.98.97 17 June. 23.19 Jun	Variable	1999.98.97	99.98.97 1 July. 1.31 Jul	99.98.97 27 July. 28.29 Jul	99.98.97 4 July. 11.12 Jul	99.98.97 14 June. 18.25 Jun	99.98 7 June. 8 Jun
	85.102.215 0.6.1	0.0.1			1.1.0		Checkerspot	85.102.215	1.0.2	1.1.0 1.1.1	0.0.1		2.3
1.0.0	2.1.0 2.1.0		0.0.1				Comma	5.11.5 1.1.1					
					0.2.0		Comma	5.3.5 8.6.0 2.1.1		1.0.0 1.0.0	0.2.4 0.0.1	2.0.0 1.0.0 1.0.0	4.3 0.1
4.3.3	3.9.1 9.25.26	1.0.0 3.1.4	2.1.1 1.0.2		0.2.0 0.1.6		Tortoiseshell	0.14.8 14.34.23 23.52.66	0.0.1 1.1.6 2.1.0	1.2.3	0.12.7 1.14.3 6.2.6	1.2.0 0.8.0	7.1
0.1.2 0.1.0	0.12.0 2.3.29 0.1.29	0.4.1 2.4.9 4.14.10	0.0.1 0.6.1 0.1.15	0.0.3 0.0.14 0.1.10		0.5.3 1.45.18 0.1.6	Cloak	0.21.8 6.66.78 52.80.185	0.4.0 6.6.7	0.2.3 6.4.5	0.2.3 33.30.43	0.0.2 0.20.60	1.1
		0.0.1			28.1.1		Lady	0.0.2			0.0.1		
							Admiral	51.15.7 30.9.0	1.10.2 30.9.0	22.4.4			
171.39.218	13.14.15	31.20.6	31.5.8	191.23.99	111.83.49	64.51.220	Wood-Satyr	579.156.596 155.285.425 0.0.1	1.0.0 0.0.83	44.152.166	16.0.4 0.50.127	61.4.26	
6.2.8	179.164.1010	9.0.0 0.1.0 2.0.1				0.0.1	Alpine	254.172.123 0.1.0 2.0.1			1.0.0	59.4.13	0.2
		0.0.1					Satyr	0.0.1 3.0.- 138.7.72					3
80.6.58	0.0.1	0.0.1	1.0.0	134.1.13	0.0.1	0.0.1	Macoun's	17.2.27	6.0.0	2.1.15	1.1.1	3.0.0	
			5.0.3	1.0.1	0.0.1	1.0.3	Uhler's					1.0.1	

jbg15may2000

* 1999 & 1998 include Waskeslu River (not done in 1997)

** Anise/Old World Swallowtail except for Sonningdale where it could also be Kahli.

jbg13may2000

Explanation

The conditions under which each count was conducted are presented in *Table 3A* - date, time, # of observers & weather - as well as some of the results - numbers of species, butterflies, party-hours (ph), party-km & butterflies/party hour. The results for each count are in *Table 3B*. The sequence for number of butterflies is 1999, 1998, 1997. Totals for 1999 and 1998 are for 12 counts; 1997 is for 11 (the Waskesiu River count started in 1998). The six species found in 1999 and 1998 only at Waskesiu River are designated by a *dash* in the 97 column.....Group names (genus & family because of no more precise identification) are in *italics*; they do not count as a species unless no other member of that group was found on the 4JC.....A small "c" means that at least one copulating pair was noted.....*Dark (black)* Swallowtail is either an Old World or Anise Swallowtail, except at Sonningdale where it could also be a Kahli Black Swallowtail.....For *Northwestern Fritillary* at Eastend, B = Bean's Northwestern Fritillary & N = Northern Northwestern.

Discussion of totals for the 12 4JCs

The number of species for 1999 was 69, 11 fewer than 1998 and 8 fewer than in 1997 (even with one less 4JC - Waskesiu) - another indication that 1999 was not a good year for butterflies in Saskatchewan. Fifteen species found in *both* 1998 and 1997 were not reported in 1999: Afranius Duskywing, Nevada and Tawny-edged skippers, Mustard White, Orange and Pink-edged sulphurs, Ruddy Copper, Striped Hairstreak, Lupine (once Acmon) Blue, Zerene, Callippe, Atlantis and Mormon fritillaries, Compton Tortoiseshell and Painted Lady - heavy on fritillaries.

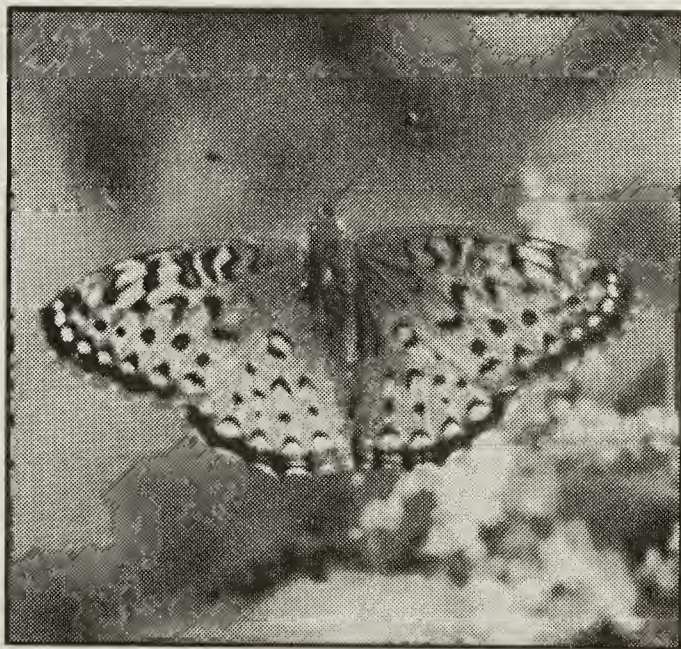
The greatest decreases for species reported in 1999 from 1998 involved 11

species: Garita Skipperling (71 in 1999 vs. 187 in 1998), Common Roadside Skipper (9 / 31), Western White (23 / 181), Cabbage White (33 / 119), Eastern Pine Elfin (6 / 32), Greenish Blue (64 / 231), Great Spangled Fritillary (30 / 116), Silver-bordered Fritillary (7 / 41), Arctic Fritillary (9 / 107), Northern Crescent (96 / 419) and Red Admiral (6 / 66).

Major increases in numbers for 1999 over 1998 involved eight species: Common Checkered Skipper (112 in 1999 vs 47 in 1998); Olympia Marble (20 / 0, apparently due to a corresponding flower ratio for the 2 years), Pearl Crescent (56 / 19), Northern Pearly-eye (51 / 15), Little Wood Satyr (30 / 9), Common Ringlet (579 / 156), Uhler's Arctic (138 / 7) and Monarch (17 / 2).

One segment of the Waskesiu River 4JC was not done because Mike Gollop turned a corner and found he was following a bear. No dedication!

1. Article reprinted from *Saskatchewan Butterflies 1999* compiled by J. B. Gollop and Anna Leighton and printed in July 2000.



Atlantis Fritillary

Juhachi Asai

NOTES AND LETTERS

COYOTES

I can't really say where my interest in coyotes came from, except that perhaps, as I got to know the raptorial birds and came to have a great deal of admiration for them, so I also began to admire the "mammalian raptors" — the hunters (rather than just "the killers"). Then, too, the coyote is so much like a dog, and I liked dogs so much. On several occasions in my early life, I recall coyotes coming very close to me. And once when I came very close to a coyote.

Ever since I can remember, I've always been fond of skating. In fact, I can remember having to attach a pair of skates to one's ordinary shoes — by means of clamps, for which you needed a special little screw-driver. You could buy the skates for a dollar or so a pair, so I had them. Ultimately, when I was in high school, I became the possessor of a pair of real skates — not just ordinary tube skates, but tube speed-skates, which had a blade of around 15 to 18 inches.

In 1925 when I taught north of Craigmyle [Alberta], Long Lake was a walk of two miles from my boarding house. On a nice day — probably in December, because Long Lake was completely frozen over — I walked to the lake with my skates. While it was frozen, there was practically no snow on it, probably a quarter of an inch of loose snow — a vast expanse of whiteness stretching across to a sandy point which would be half a mile away and which stuck out into the lake, creating a bay of a quarter-section or more in extent. The point itself was not wooded, but it gave me a reference with respect to the lake, which must have been a couple of miles across, and ten

or twelve miles long. I put on my skates, left my shoes where it was easy to find them, and started following the shore toward the east, away from the point.

The shoreline was covered with bushes and I suppose I thought I might see something as I went along. But I wasn't satisfied of course to skate in a straight line, I found it most invigorating, most exciting, because this was the first time I'd been able to skate that fall. I was absolutely alone. I started skating backwards, right turns, left turns, enjoying it thoroughly. Finally I decided it was about time for me to get back, and I headed toward my shoes. As I approached the bay, a coyote came out of the bush and started across, without apparently noticing me. I was already going at a fairly good clip, my hands behind my back in the approved style of the skater, and the minute I saw him, I thought, 'Oh here's a good chance,' and away I went in the direction of the coyote.

He didn't see me, I'm sure, and I made no noise except the swish of my skates through the little bit of snow on the ice. It retarded me slightly, so the skating was not perfect, but I could get up pretty good speed. So, it was not until I was a couple of hundred yards behind him that he looked back, and all at once realized that here was something in pursuit. Away he went. Though the footing on the ice wasn't that good for him, the bit of snow retarded me and helped him, and he got up to a pretty good pace. I can see him to this day, glancing around occasionally as he put on speed, looking at me with my arms now flailing from side to side. I took as long and as strong a stride as I could, and I was closing in on him.

It was fortunate for both of us, when I come to think of it, that there was that sandy point in the distance – because, as I got closer and closer to that Coyote, and could see him only a few feet in front of me, I thought ‘Now what am I going to *do* if I catch up with him?’ It may be that I slowed down a little when this thought came to mind — but I doubt it, because I was young and foolish, and I had a pair of gloves on. I did get extremely close to him, but then he finally reached the point, where of course I had to stop, while he had sand underneath his feet. The last I saw of him was a no doubt *very puzzled* Coyote, disappearing across the other side of the low point. It was one of my finest memories of Coyotes – one of my earliest memories of seeing a Coyote close-up. And I was close up, within a few feet of him.

- *W. Ray Salt* Extracted and edited by Jim Salt from tape-recorded memoirs , <jrsalt@Pacifikkoast.net>

THE COYOTE AND THE BADGER

I want to tell you a story about a puzzling little event. It happened four years ago on a Priddis, Alberta ranch but it wasn't until some months later that I finally understood what had actually taken place.

It was a hot August afternoon and I was seated on a hillside working on an oil painting, when I sensed some movement on my left. About 30 m away, a coyote appeared and glancing at me only once, headed down the hill at a



Coyote

Pen & ink drawing by W.Ray Salt

steady trot. The ranch land was dotted with Richardson's Ground Squirrel burrows and the coyote seemed intent on checking them all out.

At the same time I sensed more movement and, looking up, to my amazement, a large flat badger arrived and hurriedly followed in the coyote's tracks. I straightened up, anticipating a furious battle when the two met. It never happened. Both the badger and the coyote maintained a respectful distance between them and worked the gopher holes, sometimes both digging rapidly and the coyote occasionally pouncing, yet each animal always working to a personal agenda.

After a while, they moved around a bend in the creek and disappeared from my view. I was totally mystified by their tolerant and cooperative behavior to each other. Later that year, a television documentary on the animals of Yellowstone National Park answered my questions. The narrator spoke about

the unique hunting relationship that has evolved between the coyote and badger, and that this special "brotherhood" has contributed to many legends in the traditions of the native American peoples. Everything fell into place and I felt very privileged to have witnessed this extraordinary phenomenon of nature.

- Louise Cook, 21 Phillips Crescent,
Saskatoon, SK S7H 3M9.
louisecook1@home.com



Badger

Pen & ink drawing by W.Ray Salt

BOB NERO, BANDING OWLS

[In response to Bob Nero's article on Great Grey Owls in the June issue, *Blue Jay* received the following "letter" from Gene Walz.]

In a familiar green Subaru
On a farm road packed with snow
Two silhouetted figures sit
Working at their winter passion.

We honk, pull ahead of them,
Stop, and swarm around their car.

Behind the steering wheel
Bob Nero is tense and busy.
On his lap he holds what we'd hoped to see —
A supine, unprotesting Great Grey Owl,
Its fierce talons caught in Bob's firm grip,
Its head covered by a funny, white tuque.

Herb, his long-time partner,
Hands Bob a small, silvery ring.
In one deft and sudden movement
He crimps it on the owl's left leg,
Then reads aloud its coded number.
He also adds a yellow ribbon.

Leaving the car in perfect unison,
The banders meet at fender's edge
Where Bob, with quick and practiced hands,
Removes the tuque and dips the owl head-first
Into a ragged pair of panty-hose
Which Herb swings from a well-worn scale.

Pulling it out, talons-first,
From its brown, constricting pouch
Like a magician gracefully extracting a bouquet
Of thorny-stemmed roses from his magician's hat,
Bob turns the owl erect for our applause.
Yellow owl-eyes blink wildly in the stifling cold.

With an old showman's sense of the moment
Bob calls us all around.
Pushing his glasses back up his nose,
He stares directly at those yellow globes,
Then calmly bows his head, in mock submission,
Mere inches from the raptor's flexing talons.
As if on cue, the disarmed bird leans down
And combs the hair on Bob's white head
With its now-gentled beak.

Frozen in time we stand transfixed,
Afraid to clap or laugh or cheer
Lest we provoke a bloody climax
To this unscripted roadside drama.

Finally, turning his back on us,
Bob lowers his tiring arm.
The bird tenses, spreads its wings,
And frees itself from the master's grasp.
With slow and silent wing-beats
The great owl finds a distant branch:
Another ruffled but majestic "Grey"
Banded by a gentle poet's loving hand.

- Gene Walz, 525 River Road, Winnipeg, MB R2M 2R3.
walz@cc.UManitoba.ca

HUNGER CALLS OF YOUNG LONG-EARED OWLS

"Crazy as a hoot owl" is an old saying, now rarely heard. In fact, I have not noticed any crazy owls, but those here this summer at our farmstead 13 km north of Waseca are driving *me* crazy.

Beginning on July 13, I heard a bird squeaking loudly at 8 or 9 PM each night, and continuing until 3 AM. The maker of the sound was hidden in thickly branched spruce and Manitoba Maples. My ten-year-old great-niece would stand with me for ten minutes at a time, staring up at the top of an 80-foot spruce, the



Long-eared Owl young

B.E. Gehlert

site of the noise. Each squeak was a little drawn out, and occurred every 1 to 16 seconds. The pitch was "D," the second "D" down from the top of the piano. It was not until just after dark that the young owls came out of the thickly branched trees onto bare limbs of a drought-killed spruce. By this hour it was difficult to see well enough to identify them, were it not for their hunger calls and the fact that they were accompanied by a slightly larger, more compressed, and easily-identified adult Long-eared Owl, no doubt the parent. By July 17, there were six immatures on the bare limbs after dusk. The adult owl uttered a low, bark-like "chook" every now and then, but did not remain with the young.

I was intrigued by the fact that these owls would seem to "stalk" me in the dark. The last individual I saw was about July 31, a single bird in aspen at the watercourse above the New Dam 0.8 km from the farmstead. He followed me in the dark, emitting an occasional "squeeeek," until he finally settled into an adjacent bush.

- *Christine Pike*, Box 117, Waseca, SK S0M 3A0

Editor's note: There have been only a few previous Saskatchewan records of a Long-eared Owl pair raising six young to fledging age.



Long-eared Owl on a nest

Gary W. Seib



"A butterfly came pelting by to pause on a goldenrod, its wings closed up like hands held palms together; it untouched itself to go winking and blinking, now here, now there, echoing itself over the empty, wind-stirred prairie."

W. O. Mitchell, *Who Has Seen the Wind?*

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT NEAR GLASLYN, SK

A Yellow-breasted Chat, heard singing on territory, approximately 50 km north of North Battleford at 53° 13' N, 108° 20' W, is some 150 km north of any previously known records within the province.^{1, 2}

On June 5, 2000, the natural history tour that I was escorting through Saskatchewan visited Nature Saskatchewan's Turtle Lake Sanctuary with Muriel Carlson as our local guide and resource person. We stayed overnight at a Bed & Breakfast about 0.5 km east of Highway 4, on Canyon Road, midway between Cochin and Glaslyn. About 8:30 PM, on Muriel's suggestion, we descended the road into the nearby deep coulee a short distance to the east. There we heard the remarkably varied vocalization of the chat. Although we searched visually from the road for approximately one hour, and again next morning from about 7:00 to 7:30 AM, we were unable to obtain a glimpse of it, even though it sang almost continuously.

The chat sang from a site about 150 m to the north of Canyon Road and about 300 m east of the base of the hill. The valley, running east-west, parallel to the road, contains a series of flooded beaver ponds interspersed with dense willow growth and had stands of poplars at the base of the steep, south-facing slope. This habitat provided a warm microclimate that seemed optimum for the chat's normal breeding requirements. Gaining access to the north side of the wetlands, in the hope of getting a glimpse of this secretive bird, would have been time-consuming.

The vocalization of the Yellow-breasted Chat is a series of loud

squawks, grunts, groans, whistles, churrs and laughter-like sounds, which, once learned, is unmistakable. I have encountered this species on numerous occasions during the breeding season, in Ontario (Point Pelee), Texas (Big Bend National Park) and Alberta (Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park/Dinosaur Provincial Park). Because this bird sang almost continuously, it may have been unmated. Once paired, song is much less frequent, unless there is a high density of birds, such as along the Rio Grande River in Texas.

Acknowledgements:

I am indebted to Muriel Carlson for showing me this area, and to Stuart Houston for encouraging me to prepare this note.

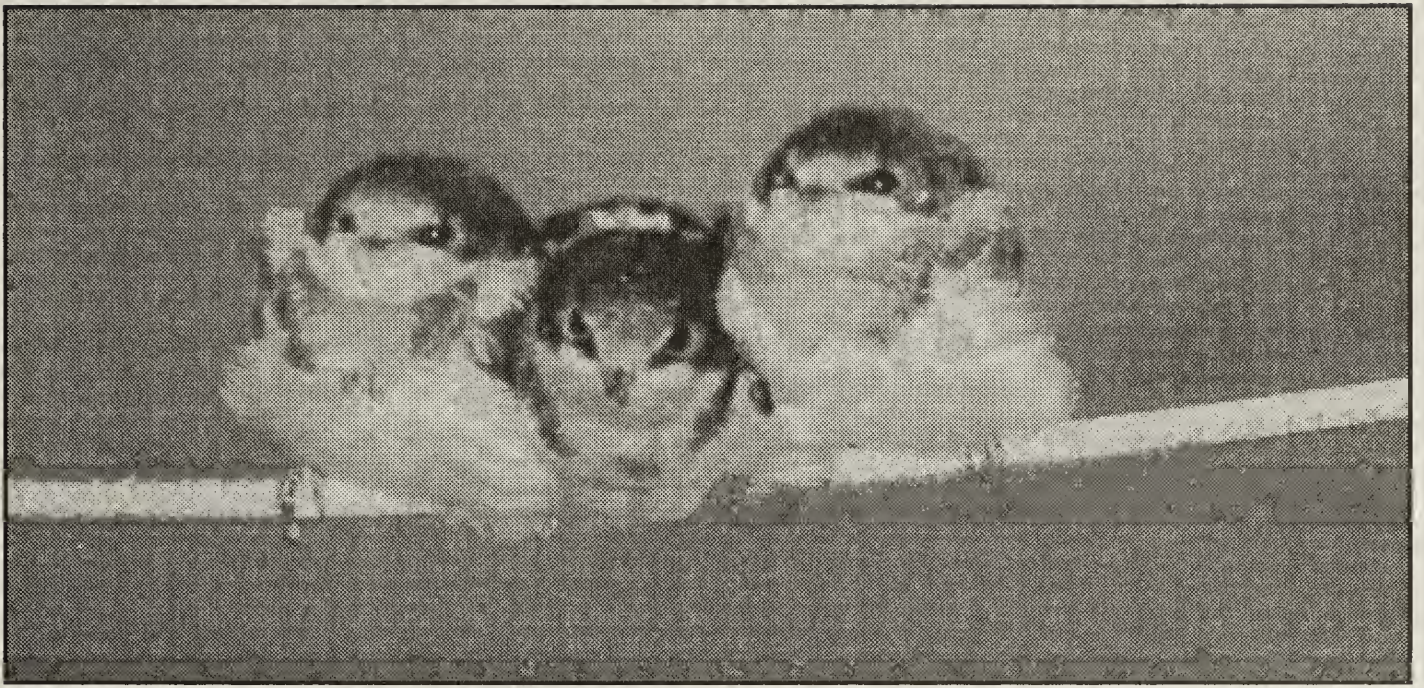
¹ Godfrey, W. Earl, 1986. The Birds of Canada, Revised Edition

² Smith, Alan R. 1996. Atlas of Saskatchewan Birds

- *Gustave J. Yaki*, 420 Brunswick Avenue SW, Calgary, AB T2S 1N8
E-mail: gyaki@calcna.ab.ca

BARN SWALLOWS COME UNGLUED

A pair of young Barn Swallows built, then abandoned, a nest under the eaves of our house, leaving four eggs. The next couple of weeks were spent by these birds in a half hearted attempt at building another nest on a nearby pot light and becoming involved with another pair that had hatched their first batch at the rear of the house. During this time the abandoned nest was filled with sticks by an industrious House Wren, no doubt adding to his extensive real estate. I was curious to see



Barn Swallows. A number of years ago these three were abandoned near death; they and the nest were swarming with mites. We raised them to release – another marvelous experience, but that's another story. Bob Davis

whether the swallow eggs were still there and while investigating, noticed that the nest had become detached from one wall and was loose. On a whim I got my hot-glue gun and glued the nest firmly to the wall. To our pleasure and great surprise, the swallows returned to the nest, laid more eggs and raised four young! We have a fondness for these wonderful little birds and have the joy of seeing about forty new birds go off our house every year.

- Bob Davis, Box 597, Eastend, SK
S0N 0T0

POSSIBLE CAT PREDATION ON BURROWING OWLS

On July 10th 2000, in a quarter section of native prairie 10 km west of Leader, Saskatchewan, I observed a very interesting event at a Burrowing Owl nest.

Reinhold Ausmus, the landowner of the quarter section, is a participant of Operation Burrowing Owl (OBO) and reported three pairs of Burrowing Owls nesting in a field 0.25 km from his farm.

As a wildlife biologist working on a Burrowing Owl banding project with the cooperation of OBO, Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) and the Beaverhill Bird Observatory, I went there to band owls but stumbled upon something else. Here are the details of what I observed that afternoon.

As I scanned the open prairie at about 1400h my attention was suddenly drawn to a slight flicker against the horizon. Crawling across the grass, sleek and inconspicuous, was a domestic cat. I watched the cat creep through the grass for approximately ten minutes with its body position low and tail lying flat, stopping briefly at each ground squirrel burrow. This easily distinguishable hunting posture intrigued me, especially when the cat slowly disappeared down one of the burrows. Knowing that Burrowing Owls had been reported in the field, I decided to see what the cat was up to.

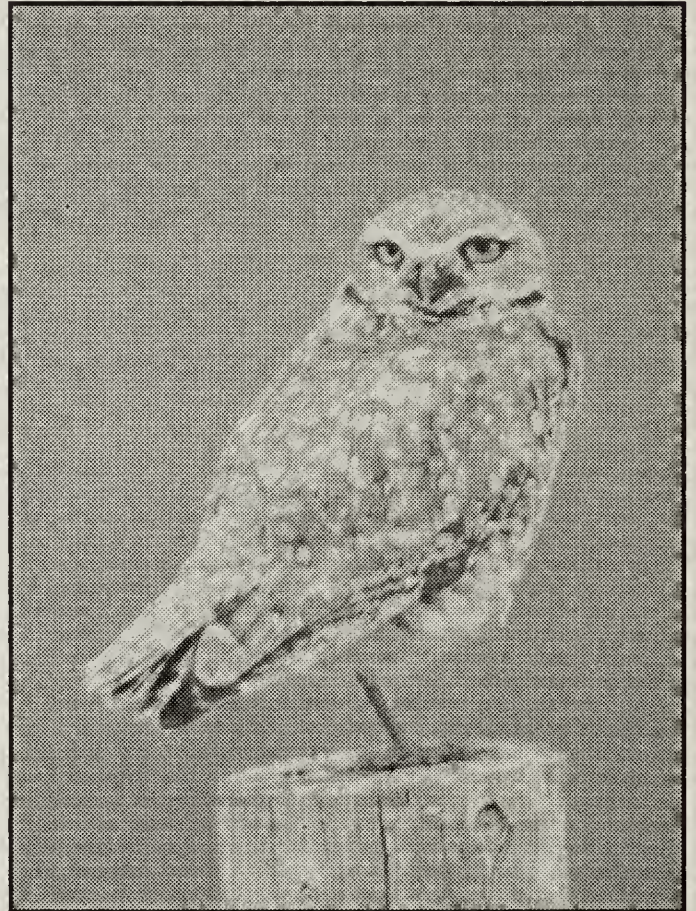
As I slowly approached the burrow, I realized that it was actually an active Burrowing Owl nest site. The burrow looked to be well used, judging by the colourful pieces of grasshopper legs,

pellets and dried cow manure scattered around the nest entrance. Two feet within the burrow I could see the eyes and ears of the cat. It was facing outwards and appeared to be crouched low to the burrow. We stared at each other briefly before it sprang out and ran away. I continued to search the field for burrowing owls. Reinhold had seen three pairs of owls and many juveniles (as many as four at one nest), two weeks prior to my arrival. I found four active-looking nest sites but did not see a single owl. Two of the burrows had Burrowing Owl feathers scattered outside. The condition of the feathers was consistent with removal by licking rather than plucking, as some feathers looked to have been partially moistened. When I examined the burrows, I discovered that a small mound of loose dirt (a cup or two) was evident two feet within the burrows. The markings were similar to that left in the burrow the cat was found hiding in.

Considering the evidence, I feel that there is a good possibility that the cat had hunted Burrowing Owls in this field. The cat behavior I observed when it crept from burrow to burrow strongly indicates that it was hunting. The cat hid in a Burrowing Owl burrow facing outwards, barely visible, suggesting that it may have been setting up for a surprise attack on the returning Burrowing Owl. The marking left by the cat as it laid within the burrow matched very well the markings found within two of the other three burrows, indicating that the cat had been at the other two nest sites. The feathers outside the two nests showed that at least two owls had been killed, and the condition of the feathers point more to what a carnivore would leave behind than a bird of prey. I conclude that the domestic cat may have been preying on Burrowing Owls based on my observations and the three missing families of owls.

I'm curious to know if anyone else has observed similar incidents. If you know of any related observations please contact me at <jeffsleno@hotmail.com> or the OBO office at 1-800-667-HOOT (4668), or geoffrey.holroyd@ec.gc.ca.

- *Jeff T. Sleno*, 23 Ash Crescent,
St. Albert, AB T6N 3J6



Burrowing Owl

Teresa Dolman

THE FOX IN THE GARDEN

A couple of years ago, we noticed the presence of a Red Fox who showed little concern at our comings and goings around the yard of our farm, 13 km west of Eastend. Usually anything resembling a human being would make a fox disappear into thin air. Our initial fears that she might have rabies were quickly dispelled by her gentle and quiet behaviour.

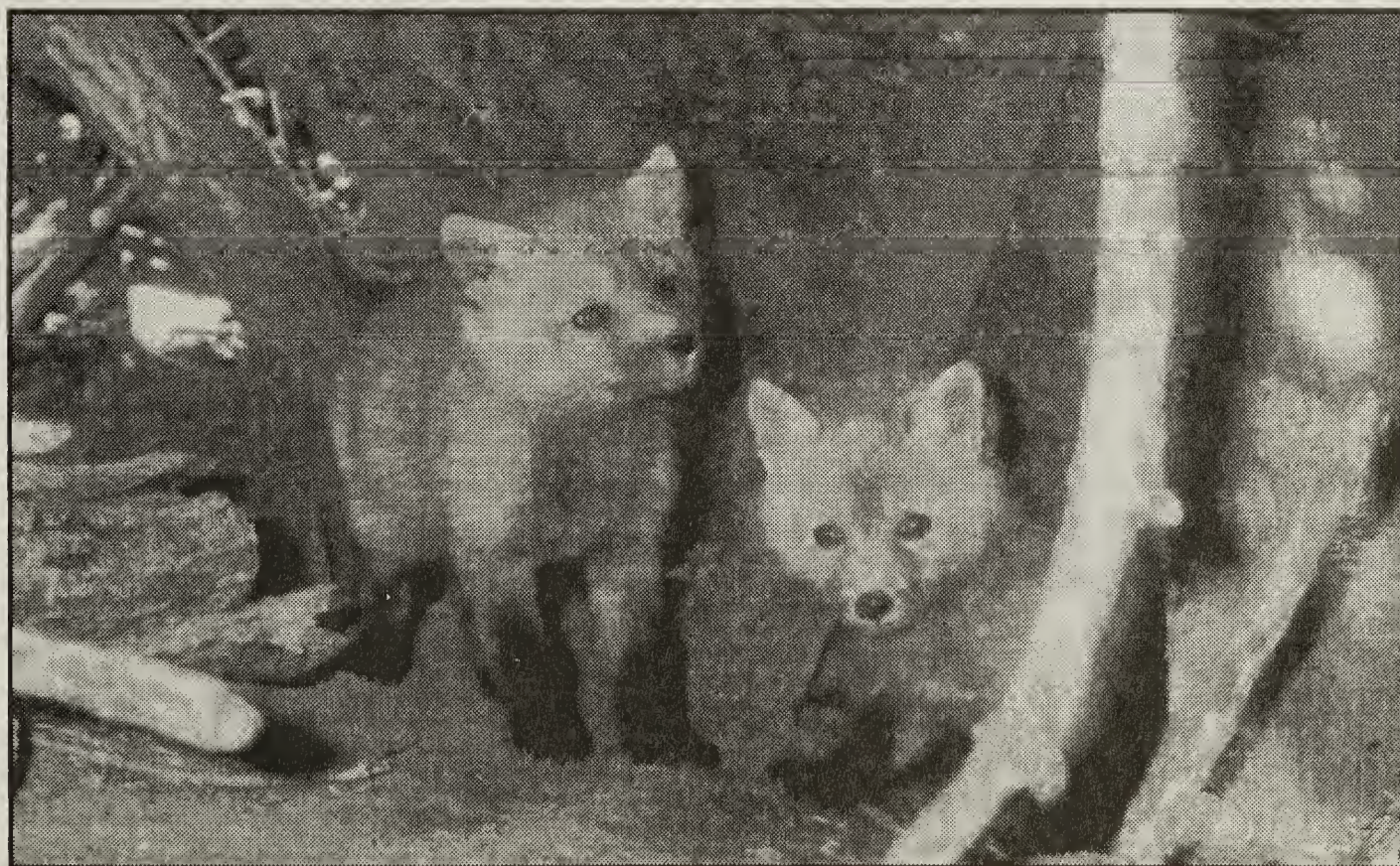
She began to join me in the garden, which lies just outside the gate in a chain link fence that surrounds the yard. As I worked in the garden, she would appear

out of nowhere, sometimes nibbling on a strawberry or kitchen scraps left for the compost, but mostly she would just sit quietly watching, or curl up and have a nap.

As the summer progressed, I thought a lot about her and wondered about this bond that seemed to be developing between us. I particularly began to think about the hard winters wild animals must experience in Saskatchewan and I began to leave food for her in the garden just beyond the gate. We soon discovered that this offering had to be left out quite late in the evening because those magnificent magpies rapidly discovered the food drop and would never pass up a free meal. She would appear very soon after the food was left and eat what she wanted while completely ignoring the pack of Wirehaired Dachshunds barking in a frenzy behind the fence not 10 feet away. Her favourite was dry dog food but table scraps were okay (except for pasta) and a cooked egg or buns were usually carried away to hide for another day.

Winter progressed, and in February, breeding time for foxes, the vixen clearly had a friend. He appeared with her at mealtime, and although he wasn't allowed to eat with her, he did his best to get her attention by rolling around at her feet.

In early spring, we were summoned outside by a commotion that only a pack of Wirehaired Dachshunds could create and, sure enough, six little fox kits were sunning themselves by their den under an old building not 15 feet from the fence. We watched the kits grow, and except for the first weeks when a visit to the shed would find them inquisitive enough to come over and sniff my shoes, they didn't show the same trust that the vixen did. By the end of June they were still slight, but growing those magnificent red tails that are the pride of any fox. By the end of July the youngsters weren't around, and the vixen was rarely seen. Perhaps she felt the need to move on, or maybe the coyotes who began to appear at the food drop forced her away. We miss her, and we hope she'll be back to sit outside the fence, wander through the garden



The Red Fox kits

Betty Davis

and make life just a little more interesting for us and the hounds behind the fence.

- *Betty Davis*, Box 597, Eastend, SK
S0N 0T0

ON FLYING MINERS

Around noon on a warm and sunny Tuesday in July, a flying miner visited and surveyed a site in the driveway one metre south of the concrete floor of the garage and three metres west of the walkway. The flying survey being completed, work commenced on the task of excavating a vertical shaft measuring in width the diameter of the miner's body...approximately 5 mm. The gravel from the excavation was disposed of over an area not more than two metres away in a series of flights numbering a dozen or more. I had by this time acquired a chair and in the cool shadow of the garage observed the progress of the operation...a sidewalk super, sort of. The miner was headfirst and three-quarters of the body length in the shaft when it was completed...a depth of approximately 25 mm. At this point there was a change in behaviour of the miner. On reversing out of the shaft there was no flight, but a hurried walk around the job site to find, as it turned out, a round stone approximating the diameter of the entrance to the shaft, which was quickly popped in place and remains there to this day.

Then the miner vanished! Well, perhaps the miner flew away...my eyes are not what they were...but if it did, it was awfully quick.

I have my suspicions of course, what with all these stories of U.F.O.s and the rings in the fields one is bound to wonder, eh! And did I mention the disguise? Oh dear, how remiss. Well,

the miner was disguised as a Thread-waisted Wasp (*Sphex procerus*) – black and orange with transparent wings.

Very crafty, but they weren't quick enough. I saw the space craft in the west bluff...disguised as a crow.

- *Daniel B. E. Thomas*, R.R.1,
Grandora SK, S0K 1V0

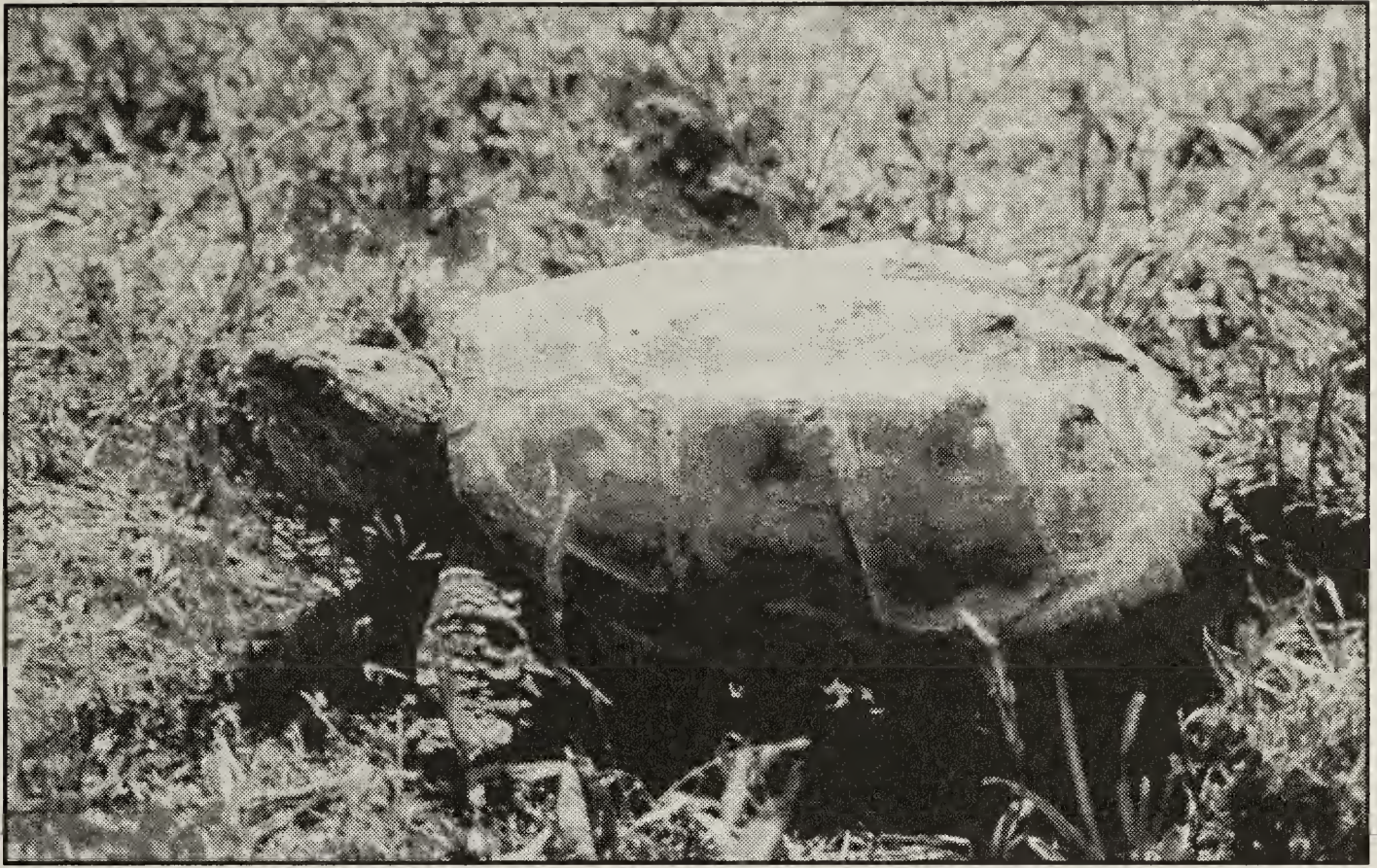
Editor's note: This is the beginning of a fantastic tale. A paralysed but living insect is placed at the end of the tunnel. The wasp lays an egg on it and it is consumed by the wasp's larva. The immature stages of the wasp overwinter in the tunnel and an adult emerges in the summer.

SNAPPING TURTLE NEAR SASKATOON

On August 23, 2000, Bob Russell called the Saskatoon Nature Society to ask that someone come out to his farm south of Saskatoon near the South Saskatchewan River to identify a snapping turtle that he had found in one of his fields, several hundred metres from the river.

Society members David Cook and Bill MacKenzie drove out to meet the Russells and their turtle. During the photo session, the turtle surprised us by moving very quickly to get on its way, being able to walk rather than crawl - a characteristic of snapping turtles. The Russells had built a fenced enclosure with a small pond and hoped to keep the turtle for a few days for those interested in seeing it.

Some weeks later, we called out to the farm to see if Bob had been able to weigh or measure the turtle. (Its carapace was 12 inches from front to



Common Snapping Turtle near Saskatoon

Bill MacKenzie

back and it weighed about 20 lbs). Bob laughed and said that just after we had gone and the turtle was alone, it had climbed over the 4 ft. fence and headed for a nearby slough. It left a clear trail to the water and hasn't been seen since.

- *Bill MacKenzie*,
151 Whiteshore Crescent,
Saskatoon, SK S7J 3W3

Editor's note: The only species of snapping turtle in SK is the Common Snapping Turtle, *Chelydra serpentina*, recognized not only by its size but also by the saw teeth on the top of the tail and the reduced plastron. This individual could be either a local release or a vagrant from the closest known natural population which is in the Qu'Appelle Valley. Chances of surviving the winter in a local slough are poor.



"Biology teachers in high schools in New York have told me they have eased botany out of the syllabus because it bores their students. ... When teachers do perform their jobs, parents may try to spare their children a botanical ordeal. Mothers look up my name in the university directory and ask me to design their kid's projects or provide them with literature. 'If you don't send my son any information, he may have to go to the library,' said one concerned mom."

Peter Bernhardt, *The Rose's Kiss*, 1999.

POETRY

SURVIVAL

Partridges
Pocketed in bluish snow
Uneasy at my coming
Take sudden wing
Cackling alarm notes
Fluttering noisily
Then falling into low formation
Sail in graceful arch-winged curves
(Silent airships, rusty-red, in missiled flight)
To snowy cover elsewhere

- *Victor C. Friesen*, Box 65, Rosthern, SK S0K 3R0

MONARCH LANTERNS

Sometime in September
as I drove west in
mid-afternoon sunshine
rattling down a gravel road
in search of grouse habitat
I found the roadsides strangely
marked at intervals with
glowing sunlit bouquets
radiant bursting milkweed pods
releasing silken seed showers
monarch butterfly food source
lighting the way, I thought
for those continental migrants.

Two cold months later
looking for snowy owls
down from northern lands
I walked through snow
to gather some of those empty pods
bringing you a winter bouquet
birdlike hollow husks on erect stalks
twisted dry silvery-grey cusps
thrumming in the wind.

- *Robert W. Nero*, 546 Coventry Road, Winnipeg, MB R3R 1B6

RIVER IN A DRY LAND : A PRAIRIE PASSAGE

TREVOR HERRIOT. 2000. Stoddart, Toronto. 356 pp. Hard cover \$34.95 ISBN 0-7737-3271-3

"I may not know who I am, but I know where I am from". Quoting Wallace Stegner, another writer shaped by his early years in prairie Saskatchewan, Trevor Herriot emphasizes the importance of place, in his case the eastern Qu'Appelle River Valley, in shaping his destiny and convictions.

River in a Dry Land, Herriot's first book, fully merits the acclaim it has already received. It is a complex and beautifully rendered account of the history — geological, natural and human — of the Qu'Appelle River and its valley. Trevor began writing the book after an extended exploration of the entire watershed in the summer of 1996. *River in a Dry Land* is many things: reflective, critical, searching; exuberant, sensitive, witty; always eloquent, occasionally bitter, and in the end, modestly hopeful.

The book begins with a prologue which contains a brief portrayal of the native people who have lived in the valley for 10,000 years, an indication of what attracts him to the valley, and reflections on the road he, and all of us, will have to take if the integrity of the valley, indeed of Saskatchewan, is to be restored. Part I looks at the natural boundaries of the Qu'Appelle watershed, man's place in the scheme of things, and the centrality of water, "a visible sign of the interconnectedness of all living things." Part II deals with Herriot's exploration of the upper

Qu'Appelle, the building of the Gardiner and Elbow dams, and the demolition of Mistaseni, a huge erratic sacred to the plains Indians. Part III continues the exploration down river, through Eyebrow Marsh, Buffalo Pound, the south end of Last Mountain Lake, the chain of lakes east of Regina with their towns, resort villages and First Nations reserves, and finally a wetter landscape, Round Lake and the densely wooded eastern end of the Qu'Appelle Valley. Part IV is a history of settlement in the valley, seen chiefly in the vivid account of three generations of Herriot's family, their neighbors, and their connection with the village of Tantallon. The book ends with a brief epilogue: Trevor takes a long walk, past pond, through woods, to the knoll above the river, and down to Little Cutarm Creek before it enters the Qu'Appelle. It is a misty, early autumn morning; migrant warblers, frogs, a muskrat, "a healthy stand of big bluestem as high as [his] shoulders," suggest that the Little Cutarm, "Kiskipittonawe Sepesis," survives. And he concludes, "For a moment, in the increasing light of that blessed morning, I was able to forgive and to hope."

River in a Dry Land is in the tradition of the great books that reflect upon the earth's riches, wonder and beauty and man's treatment of the planet. In Herriot's work I find echoes of the reverence for nature found in Barry

Lopez's *Arctic Dreams*; the realization of place, perfected in Wallace Stegner's account of pioneer life in the Frenchman River Valley in *Wolf Willow*, and the sympathetic depiction of people in a challenging environment in W. O. Mitchell's *Who Has Seen the Wind?* Saddened by man's failure, thus far, to come to terms with the environment, Herriot can only hope that we will be "able to head off ecological catastrophe and find deliverance." Where to begin? He knows there are no easy answers, but at one place in the book, after he has visited the Piapot Reserve, he writes: "Nothing less than respect will do for even the least in Creation, even for the dirt and stones beneath our feet. ... A people who will at least pause in respect before they plough their gardens, gather field stones, or take a hillside's store of gravel are capable of gratitude and of recognizing limits, the community of ownership, the need to conserve. Respect — a gesture, a prayer, an invocation, a recollection —

intervenes as the pause between desire and use, between appetite and acquisition. Respect alone may not reunite us with the prairie, but it seems a fair place to start."

His book is not an easy read. He deals with complex issues, fortunately with extended examples and in lucid prose. I strongly advise a dictionary (you may want to check out words like inosculation, intaglio, topiary, divot-resistant, *in situ*, atavism, gibbous and geomancy) and a good atlas or a set of the appropriate Geographic Survey maps. And if you're like me, you'll enjoy the second reading even more than the first. In particular, return to the Prologue and Chapter One, "Lines on the Circle." Having read and reread the book you will appreciate more fully the wisdom of this prophet, still young, living in our very midst.

Reviewed by J. Frank Roy, 650 Costigan Way, Saskatoon, SK S7J 3R2



"Given the means and sufficient leisure, a large portion of the populace backpacks, hunts, fishes, birdwatches and gardens. In the United States and Canada, more people visit zoos and aquariums than attend all professional athletic events combined. They crowd the national parks to view natural landscapes, looking from the tops of prominences out across rugged terrain for a glimpse of tumbling water and animals living free. They travel long distances to stroll along seashore, for reasons they can't put into words. These are examples of what I call *biophilia*, the connections that human beings subconsciously seek with the rest of life."

Edward O. Wilson, *The Diversity of Life* (1992).

NATURE SASKATCHEWAN NEWS

NATURE SASKATCHEWAN FELLOWS AWARD

Presented to Garth Nelson.

Garth Nelson is most certainly one of the hardest working members of the Society. From 1995 to 1999, he served on the Nature Saskatchewan board as our Conservation Director. He set the standard for our board members with his well-written reports and perspectives, and articulate presentations. Prior to his term on the Nature Saskatchewan board, he was on the board of the Saskatoon Nature Society, serving as president in 1994-1996. Garth has also led numerous tours to natural areas around the province conveying his knowledge and love of nature to others. Garth's many years of hard work in the name of conservation make him worthy of being designated a Fellow of the Society. (Excerpted from the award presentation made by Diana Bizeki Robson, NS President)

NATURE SASKATCHEWAN CONSERVATION AWARD 2000

Presented to Muriel Carlson

Muriel's involvement with the Turtle Lake district goes back many years. She and her husband Garry purchased property and built a small cabin on Indian Point when their children were small. Over the years she has compiled detailed records of Turtle Lake's natural history, and has now expanded her horizons to include large tracts of the surrounding countryside.



Muriel Carlson receiving the Conservation Award from Nature Saskatchewan's President, Diana Bizeki Robson.

Muriel's determination to preserve a portion of the area's natural habitat was a logical consequence of her work there. Almost single-handedly, she began promoting the idea among Turtle Lake residents, while finding her way through the multi-leveled maze of government bureaucracy and at the same time tackling corporations, businesses, and other related organizations for funding. Nature Saskatchewan's Turtle Lake Sanctuary is now a reality.

Currently, Muriel is directing her energies towards the establishment of a Turtle Lake chapter of Nature Saskatchewan, and organizing boreal forest field trips for upcoming Nature Saskatchewan events. Her infectious enthusiasm for the cause of nature never wavers. I wonder if someone should warn Victoria about the dynamo who has selected that fair city for a wintering ground! (Excerpted from the award presentation made by Diana Bizeki Robson, NS President)

NATURE SASKATCHEWAN VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Presented to Burt Gibson

Burt Gibson of Regina stepped in to keep the Blue Jay Bookshop functioning in the summer of 1999. Without him, the bookshop would have closed. He made sure the bookshop orders were made promptly, maintained the inventory and greatly assisted the office staff with bookshop financial matters and with the bookshop catalogue. In addition, he trained the current Bookshop Manager, Diane Secoy-Smith, who took over in April 2000. Burt and his wife Lois are former Blue Jay Bookshop Managers and he has been a very active member of the Regina Natural History Society. (Written by Robert Warnock, Director of Member Services).

MORGOTCH AWARD

Jean Harris's spectacular slides of Great Horned Owls shown at the Nature Saskatchewan Fall Meet earned her this award.

CLIFF SHAW AWARD

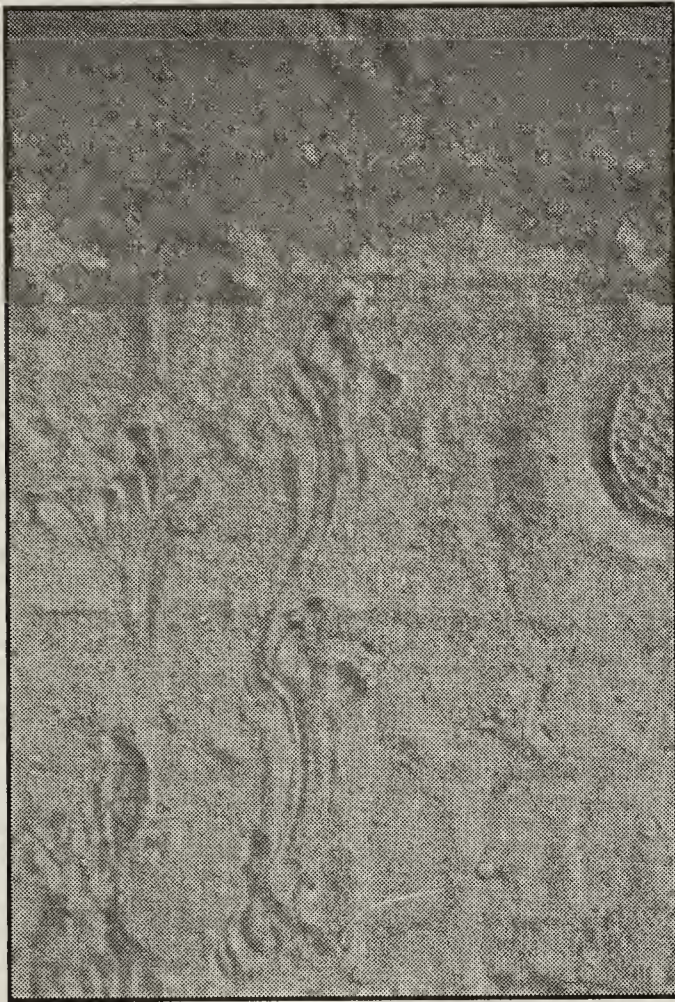
This award for the best, written submission to Blue Jay in the last year was given to Carolyn Curtis of Winnipeg for her article, "Birds, Bugs and Bears" which appeared in the December 1999 issue.



This Chickadee was bathing so hard, it flipped over on its back.

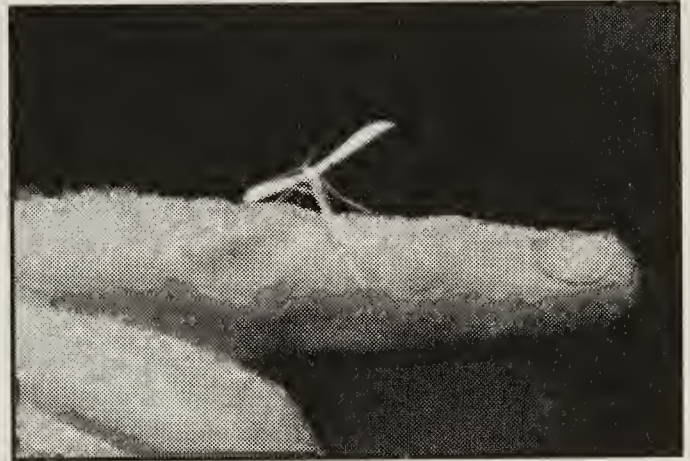
Gwen Klebeck

MYSTERY PHOTO



Whose ornately scrolled track is this? It was found on a dusty trail in the river valley near Saskatoon early on the morning of May 9. (The heel imprint of a running shoe on the right will give you an idea of the scale.)

Answer for SEPTEMBER 2000 MYSTERY PHOTO.



This delicate creature is a Plume Moth (family Pterophoridae). Looking unwieldy on its long legs, the moth's fringed, segmented wings are its most unusual feature. The hind wings are especially deeply cut and each of the three segments is fringed like a feather, giving the family its name. The long narrow segments are not visible in this photograph of a live moth; it folds its hind and forewings together and holds them at right angles to its body.

Jim Wolford of Nova Scotia correctly identified this mystery photo. Thanks for writing in!

We would also like to thank Ron Hooper for his help with this mystery photo.

- Eds.

ERRATA

The September 2000 issue of Blue Jay is Volume 58 Number 3, not Volume 58, Number 2 as shown on the cover of that issue.

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